



African Communist

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REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION

The Central Committee assesses
the post-election environment



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Assessing the Party's role in these turbulent times

The political report to the June Central Committee, published in this issue of *The African Communist*, analyses the trajectory of forces in struggle within South Africa in our present conjuncture. The paradox of our situation is that the greatest threat to advancing a National Democratic Revolution, to consolidating our hard-won democratic constitutional order, and to defending public resources and national sovereignty, comes not from without, but from within the ANC itself.

We should not be surprised.

Already in early June, the CC correctly predicted that the relatively successful ANC-Alliance election victory in May under the leadership of Cde Cyril Ramaphosa would not be followed by deepening unity, but by an intensification of the factional struggle inside of the ANC by those implicated in state capture.

The state-capture faction was actively gambling on a major electoral setback for the ANC. Their intention was to dislodge Cde Ramaphosa as president on the grounds of “non-performance”. There was a deliberate passivity in the election campaign from these quarters. On the eve of the election, Jacob Zuma consorted with the ragtag, anti-ANC “Black First, Land First” outfit led by Andile Mngxitama. It was an outfit closely associated with the Guptas. Ace Magashule and others in the ANC have consorted with some of the other electoral pop-ups, like Jimmy Manyi’s appropriately named ATM party.

This factional activity is, of course, part of a desperate fight-back campaign in the face of an avalanche of evidence emerging from the Zondo Commission into state capture, and other commissions of in-

quiry into the South African Revenue Service (SARS), and the Public Investment Corporation. The desperation has been heightened by new appointments to the National Prosecuting Authority and to SARS, designed to shake up and clean out these critical institutions that the state capture faction had deliberately eroded.

While noting these realities, the contributions in this issue of *The African Communist* all seek to go beyond just a general description of state capture and of the personalities involved. How is it possible that a manifestly counter-revolutionary faction could have emerged powerfully inside of the ANC? It is clearly not just a question of individuals and of personal moral degeneration – although it is that, too. Does a class analysis enable us to better understand the phenomenon loosely described as “state capture”? The CC political report advances the important concept of primitive accumulation as a key explanation for the factors underpinning what became industrial-scale looting of public resources.

Most of the contributions in this issue of *The African Communist* also concern themselves with organisational matters. Is the ANC appropriately structured to carry forward its core role as a broad movement to advance national democratic transformation? And what is the ANC currently – not in name, but in actual practice? Is the SACP with its current membership of more than 300 000 appropriately organised to play a vanguard socialist role within the context of this broader national democratic struggle? What lessons, if any, can we learn from new organisational approaches that have provided momentum to left-leaning initiatives in the US and UK?

Over the past two or three years, the SACP has often found itself providing political leadership in the fight against state capture to a very wide range of social forces, including even business formations. In a sense, the SACP has had to step into what historically we have regarded

as being the ANC's core multi-class, nation-building function. But the ANC has often been flat-footed in the face of its own internal challenges. What implications does this patriotic and democratic constitutionalist role of the Party have for advancing an anti-capitalist strategic vision?

How do we prevent a successful struggle against state capture from simply returning us to the era of the 1996 class project with its neo-liberal austerity approach?

These are some of the many questions that this issue takes up. Comradely debate, a preparedness to practice constructive criticism and self-reflection and, above all, practical work in all key sites of struggle are more important than ever. ●

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

After the election: revolution and counter-revolution

The Political Report to the SACP Central Committee on 7-9 June 2019 assesses global and South African conditions following the May general election, the prospects for strengthening the NDR and the threat of counter-revolution

This Central Committee occurs at a very challenging time. The national situation, in its interaction with a deepening global capitalist crisis, calls for sober SACP analysis, collective leadership, and well executed strategic action. It is a national reality that is unfolding within an increasingly hostile global political and economic environment.

The global environment: from neo-liberal capitalism to enclaves of capitalist barbarism

When the historic ANC Morogoro Conference took place in 1969, its *Strategy and Tactics* document noted, inter alia, that the world was in a transition from capitalism to socialism, thus simultaneously creating space for national democratic and other anti-colonial struggles to lay a strong foundation for, if not socialist, at the very least anti-capitalist paths of development. It was partly this context that informed Slovo's seminal text *No Middle Road*.

One of the key features of the aftermath of the 2008 global capital-

ist economic crisis is the significant rolling back of social democratic alternatives to neo-liberalism, as well as the emergence of a variety of populist and right-wing demagogic and neo-fascist tendencies that rose to power in many parts of the world, especially in North America and Europe. In places like Ukraine, even clowns have won presidential elections (this is no joke – a clown literally won)! These political trends, perhaps like the Left before them, are fighting against established capitalist political establishments, although without fighting against the capitalist system itself.

The triumph of Trump in the US, that of Bolsonaro in Brazil, and the various setbacks suffered by the Left in Latin America have further emboldened imperialism. The frontal offensive against Venezuela illustrates the effect of the combination of both the Left reversals and the emboldening of imperialism, in particular US imperialism. The huge defeat of both the Indian National Congress and the communist parties of India in that country's recent election further points to the strengthening of right-wing forces globally. In particular, these developments also point to the increasingly complex challenges and difficulties posed by electoral politics for the Left, especially in this era of big war chests for electoral campaigning. This has occurred at a time when the resources of working class and other Left parties are clearly on the decline. These realities are also taking place against the backdrop of the continuing decline of a permanent workforce globally, thus threatening even the viability of the trade union movement as we have known it.

The growing use of new technologies in contesting election campaigns seems to be under the control of or in favour of Right-wing forces. The initial assessment by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) of the recent Indian elections seems to point to this reality: "The BJP could successfully shift the popular narrative away from the multitude of livelihood issues that the last five years of the NDA gov-

ernment had imposed. The narrative built around communal nationalist jingoism, along with the issues of fighting terrorism, brushed aside all other issues of the day-to-day concerns of the people.

“This was aided by the build up of the Modi persona through a combination of factors. These included the effective use of technology and its instruments of messaging to the people backed by big data analytics and micro level social engineering. Sections of the media partnered such projection backed by massive money power... The electoral base of the CPM(M) saw a big erosion in our strongholds.”

This reflects a grudging, and almost helpless, concession by communists in India to the combined impact of right-wing populist ideology, better use of technology, and money in the victory of the BJP. Coincidentally the Central Committee of the CPI (M) is sitting at the same time as our CC (7-9 June 2019) to assess the results.

One of the impacts of the Indian elections is that two of our Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa bloc) partners are controlled by right-wing political formations, thus increasingly narrowing options for Brics to play a Left and counter-hegemonic role in today's global political economy.

Another key feature of the current global political economy is that of the so-called trade war between China and the United States, and its impact on global and domestic economies.

The May 2018 warning from the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of Southern Africa (Seifsa) on the likely impact of the US' announcement of plans for 25% and 10% import tariffs that on steel and aluminium respectively. On behalf of the South African government, then Minister of Trade and Industry, Rob Davies, made unsuccessful representations to the US government to exempt South Africa from the imposition of the large permanent tariffs on steel and aluminium.

Seifsa underlined that the US tariffs States would “directly cost South African exporters roughly R3-billion worth of steel products and R474-million worth of aluminium products respectively”. The South African steel industry would be starved of foreign currency with a correspondingly negative impact on South Africa’s foreign reserves, argued Seifsa, and a possible fall in the amount of steel and aluminium products exported to the US. The result, according to Seifsa, would include retrenchments by South African companies dependent on exports to the US.

On 4 June 2019, StatSA revealed that the economy had contracted by 3,2% in the first quarter of 2019. The StatsSA GDP statistical release for the first quarter of 2019 was preceded by the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the first quarter of the year. The number of employed workers had decreased by 237 000, to 16,3-million. Formal sector employment recorded the largest decline, with the manufacturing sector employment falling by 69 000 on a year-on-year basis, from 1 849 000 to 1 780 000.

There were obviously other factors behind the retrenchments. But there can be no doubt that unfavourable international trade in steel and aluminium has contributed to the negative impact on manufacturing activity and employment in South Africa.

The unfavourable steel and aluminium trade environment points to the far more damaging impact of the US-prompted trade war. The trade war is not limited to China and its thriving corporations such as Huawei. It is wider than that and involves, among others, divide and rule tactics such as exemptions from the imposition of trade tariffs. Among those initially, although temporarily, excluded from the tariffs were the European Union, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Mexico and South Korea – a list with clear political underpinnings, apparently guided by the US imperialist agenda and its existing or potential alliances.

Perhaps the most important lesson is that individual national responses, such as that of our steel and aluminium industries, are not adequate. The conduct of the US government generally requires a united global response by progressive forces – the longstanding, and recently reinforced embargo against Cuba, is a prime example. So too are the persistent US attempts to overthrow the elected Venezuelan government, through coups and other means, and heightened aggression against other Left or Left-leaning governments in Latin America.

The election of right-wing governments in Brazil and India do not auger well for the Brics initiative. The global south is fluid. Our own continent is fractured by imperialist-driven divisions and domestic conflicts: the occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco, the crisis in Zimbabwe, conflicts in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and so on. The main question is what is to be done, and what potential alliances can be forged to advance the international anti-imperialist struggle. This is an important issue for discussion by the SACP.

2019 general election

The ANC-led movement's 57,5% represents a very reasonable achievement given:

- The organisational disarray of the ANC and the parallel factional work and active de-campaigning by the fight-back factions. This included collaboration with the EFF and the support for pop-up political formations (paid for by looted resources) like the ATM, and the BLF; and
- The avalanche of sordid information emerging from the Zondo Commission and the inquiries into the South African Revenue Service (SARS) and the PIC. The work of these commissions is absolutely crucial, but the detail and sordid information emerging from them certainly contributed to a general public sense that “the ANC is rot-

ten” and “all politicians are dirty”.

These have been among the reasons for the drift away of electoral support for incumbent parties (especially the ANC, down 4,64% on 2014 – but also the DA, down 1,47%).

More significantly, the general erosion of the reputation of electoral politics can be seen in the large number of South Africans who are qualified to vote but who did not bother to register (9,2-million – more quarter of South Africans who could be registered). These are mainly among the youth. Even more concerning is that only 17,7-million of the 26,8-million who are registered actually voted on 8 May (66%, down from 73,5% in 2014).

While it is to be expected that over 25 years there will have been a decline in active participation in electoral politics from the extremely high levels in 1994 and 1999, it would be a serious mistake to characterise the current decline as merely a “maturing of democracy”. It is clearly a symptom of broad disillusionment and of growing social alienation that, unless addressed, will undermine the prospects of advancing and defending a serious NDR.

Liberals have complained about the ANC’s dominance in South Africa post-1994, and about the “dangers” of single party dominance. The parasitic looting and sheer sense of untouchable arrogance by premiers in provinces with historically safe ANC majorities play into this liberal paradigm.

However, the fact is that wherever there has been serious, progressive structural transformation (whether in the social democratic Nordic countries, in China, or even in the more forthrightly capitalist post-war Japan, or South Korea), there has been sustained single party dominance. During the past 25 years the ANC has largely squandered its national (and most provincial) electoral majorities.

Although liberals, including the DA, have been saluting the on-com-

ing era of “coalition politics”, the fact is that generally speaking coalitions (especially centrist coalitions based on neo-liberal austerity packages) are ill-suited to driving serious structural transformation. But in South Africa, our triple crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality requires major structural transformation (as broadly outlined in the SACP’s *Going to the root*).

The Ramaphosa factor

The ANC’s 57,5% May 2019 result nonetheless represents an important recovery from the low point of its 2016 local government result (53,9%). Without the “Ramaphosa factor”, and clear signs of a determination to deal with the worst of corruption – new NPA appointments, removal from the South Africa Reserve Bank of Tom Moyane, support for the Zondo commission, etc – the downward trajectory of ANC electoral performances in the latter years of Zuma’s presidency would have continued. In fact, the ANC may well have scored less than 50% nationally (although not quite the “40% without Ramaphosa” that Fikile Mbalula mentioned in one interview).

One notable feature of the May results was a consistent pattern of the ANC (“Ramaphosa”) performing better in the national votes than in provincial votes. The ANC’s national vote in Gauteng was 2,7% higher than its provincial tally. In the Western Cape the figure was 2,5%. Interestingly the ANC’s national vote was often the result of both DA and EFF provincial voters splitting their votes. In the North West the EFF ceded nearly 2% to the ANC in the national ballot. In Mpumalanga in the national tally the EFF was down 1% and the DA down 0,7% relative to the ANC’s performance.

Another notable feature was the improved EFF national vote (up 4,44% from 2014), FF+ (up 1,48%), and the IFP (up nearly 1%). While it was not necessarily exactly the same pool of voters who moved from

one party to another between 2014 and 2019, there is a significant correlation between the EFF's improvement and the ANC's decline (4,44% and -4,64%); the FF+'s improvement and the DA's decline (- 1,47% and 1,48%); and the IFP's improvement and the NFP's implosion (0,98%-1,22%).

The growing social and political alienation in our country has resulted in both voter non-registration and non-participation by registered voters.

But it has also seen an electoral drift towards pseudo-left populism coupled with anti-minority racism (the EFF) and ethnic mobilisation (the FF+ and IFP). Although the FF+ is, in conventional terms, the more right-wing of these formations, in practice it is less of a threat to the NDR and our constitutional democracy. It provides a constitutional (if right-wing leaning) political home to white Afrikaans-speaking lower middle class, rural and working class strata, as well as parts of the Afrikaans intelligentsia, who have also been marginalised by neo-liberalism and who do not identify with the billionaire Stellenbosch mafia.

As we predicted in the 1980s, the IFP's influence will last only for so long as the apartheid regime was in power. The IFP (thanks to ANC consolidation and winning over many IFP communities, supporters and members from about the late 1990s-early 2000s) has been declining steadily, except in the 2019 elections. But by all accounts, the 'recovery' of the IFP in the 2019 elections is as a direct result of the significant decline of the NFP, largely due to the illness of its leader, Zanele KaMagwaza Msibi. It is also a party that, since its formation, has been largely dependent on its leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

(It is worth noting that as Buthelezi's retirement comes closer the campaign slogan of the IFP has shifted from 'Trust in Buthelezi' to 'A party that is trustworthy'), though this was also indirectly appealing on Buthelezi as a trustworthy leader. However, continuous blunders

and the marginalisation of communities by the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal (which is the IFP's home base) can lead to some losses of ANC votes to the IFP, although the bigger threat now to the ANC in KZN is the EFF. The IFP's Achilles heel is that it remains a rural KZN party with relatively elderly voters, and little support among young rural or urban voters.

The EFF

It is the EFF's performance that requires particular close scrutiny and understanding. Its rapid progress since its formation, and the 10,8% national support it received in May is significant, if less than the EFF itself anticipated. Its campaign was well financed (the source of its funding requires serious scrutiny) and was highly visible and energetic compared to the often half-hearted ANC effort, with a cadreship that penetrated remote areas, many for the first time. Also notable was the "hope", the sense of a "struggle to be fought", that clearly inspired many of its volunteers in a situation where many young people feel utterly alienated and marginalised. If a greater proportion of youth were registered voters then the EFF would probably have scored better.

Much of the EFF's successes and advantages are attributable to seriously problematic features – a large war chest from looting (going all the way back to ANCYL days in Limpopo); the demagogic effectiveness and energy of Julius Malema, coupled with strong authoritarian features (which result in a highly "disciplined", even militarised campaign – but also a high turnover of MPs: any mild challenges results in immediate dismissal); and simple/simplistic policy positions easily translatable into slogans (and social media messaging). These sloganeering policy positions are also assisted by the EFF not carrying any (formal) governance responsibilities.

But the EFF's relative successes must also be attributed to weakness-

es of the ANC-movement – in particular, the weaknesses of the ANC Youth League but also, generally speaking, the rest of the Progressive Youth Alliance. On many campuses the EFF has succeeded in attracting some of the brightest and genuinely Left-leaning activists.

From a more specifically SACP perspective we should note that the EFF has been much more effective than we have in sustaining and coordinating its social media effort. Although a stronger social media presence has been discussed, and although individual Party members have been active, our coordinated media efforts continue to be traditional.

The SACP must continue to expose the EFF Malema leadership and its hypocrisy which includes:

- Opportunistic support for the Office of the Public Protector – ie: the current Public Protector narrowly on her Gordhan findings, while conveniently forgetting the damning 2012 Public Protector report on Malema’s doings in Limpopo “On Point of Tenders”, a report the media also appears to have forgotten;
- The plunder of VBS bank;
- The support for Tom Moyane (apparently because of Malema’s tax dodges); and
- Malema’s Inanda Club life-style, etc.

But we should not simply dismiss the EFF’s middle cadres and broader following – many of whom are genuinely attracted to socialism (though not necessarily to Marxism), and who are keen to have a serious engagement.

As the SACP we also need to ask ourselves whether we are getting the balance right between honouring our past and speaking to the issues confronting young people in particular. Are we also getting the balance right between engaging (necessarily) with internal ANC-movement politics, and projecting a clear and inspiring socialist message?

The Socialist Revolutionary Workers' Party

Another notable election result was fall out from the 8 May election is the dismal failure of the SRWP – getting a paltry 24 439 votes, notwithstanding its fairly considerable financial resources. A very late start to campaigning by the SRWP was one contributing factor – but the late start was itself a symptom of a wider set of issues. National Union of Metal Workers of SA (Numsa) General Secretary Irvin Jim's personal personality cult approach, and his narrowly dogmatic, and hyper-vanguardist approach to party politics meant the necessary support was forthcoming neither from within Numsa nor Saftu. Jim also underestimated the strong, residual pro-ANC sentiments (and probably also pro-Ramaphosa) within his union, within the broader Saftu, and also in his home base in the EC. He also clearly had a tactical, if not strategic, falling out with Vavi.

There are clearly lessons for the SACP in the event that we opt for an independent Party electoral approach in forthcoming elections:

- The SACP and Numsa have roughly the same memberships (300 000). Of course, a trade union membership is not the same as a political party membership, but one lesson from the SRWP-Numsa experience is that membership doesn't necessarily translate into votes, remembering also that in our case, many Party members are also ANC members and supporters. Even supposing every single Party member had voted for a hypothetical SACP on the voters roll in 2019, that alone would still have given us less than the FF+ 's 414 864 votes. This is not, per se, an argument against the SACP contesting elections independently. But it is a cautionary note – any SACP electoral effort (whatever the particular modality) must be embedded within a broad popular movement;
- Related to this is the need for an accurate reading of the popular mood among the Party's core potential base. If the ANC's December

2017 national conference had a different outcome, if Zuma had not been forced to resign in early 2018, if there was not the beginning of an effective struggle against state capture – then the RSWP might have done much better;

- The rote recitation of a dogmatic “Marxism-Leninism” has little popular or working class appeal. Our anti-capitalist and pro-socialist positions need to be embedded within actual day-to-day struggles on housing, land, job casualisation, violence against women and children, against corruption, and dealing with the massive impact of climate change on poor communities through floods and droughts, etc. Without this we will simply make socialism seem like an intellectual, point-scoring pastime or some narrow workerism;
- We also need to consider the revolutionary potential and capacity of the trade union movement – not abstractly and timelessly – but in the actual reality of present-day South Africa. Have we lost what we began to forge in the second half of the 1980s – a deepening bond between community struggles and workplace struggles? Is the current union movement structured for and capable of actively organising and defending the unemployed, the underemployed, the informalised? Is the trade union movement in 2019 still developing a revolutionary cadre as in the past, which is capable of moving from union leadership into leading party political and government roles? (We are not thinking here of individuals, there are clearly outstanding individuals emerging from the unions - but rather a corps of cadres being reproduced generationally); and, closely related to this,
- The lesson to be learnt from this is that it is not easy to simply turn trade union members into voters and key campaigners for a party being built directly out of trade union structures. This was another serious miscalculation by Numsa.

The Alliance post-election

The ANC's relatively good electoral performance has strengthened the anti-corruption front within the movement and further weakened its opponents. Ramaphosa's Cabinet appointments and other state-based moves have further contributed to this. However, these are **relative** advances: the organisational machinery of much of the ANC, along with ill-gotten war chests, remains with the parasitic looters. They are using these resources to wage an intensified, if increasingly desperate, fight-back campaign. Particularly at the ANC regional and branch levels little has changed.

A protracted battle across many fronts remains a major necessity. It remains uncertain whether the ANC has the internal capacity to revive itself. There are several possible scenarios, including the possibility of a major internal ANC split, or an enervating and continued stalemate between competing factions. If that remains the reality, the ANC will almost certainly slip below 50% in future elections.

For the SACP and its membership the 2019 election and the campaign and earlier developments that preceded it has had a contradictory and seemingly paradoxical impact. The SACP's role in the second half of 2017, in the run-up to the ANC's December conference, had an important impact on the conference outcome. The SACP (and YCL) created important space for the anti-corruption grouping within the ANC, headed by Ramaphosa. Party-YCL structures provided numerous platforms for this grouping in no-go areas in KZN, NW, etc.

But at the ANC national conference, this role, and the Party's consistent anti-state capture stance, marked the Party out as a particular "enemy" for the parasitic factions. Our role in the Metsimaholo by-election was also opportunistically used by these factions. On the other hand, when it came to NEC elections, the SACP did not enjoy effective support from the anti-corruption centrists, who were narrowly looking af-

ter their own – and who, in any case, often had less effective inner-ANC machinery. For the first time no SACP officials were elected on to the NEC. Much the same thing happened with the ANC parliamentary electoral lists, with deliberate SACP exclusions along with neglect resulted in large numbers of effective Party comrades being marginalised.

Over the past two years the SACP has made an important contribution to helping the ANC rescue itself, and to pulling the country back from the brink – but we have been made to pay for this.

Another big challenge in the Alliance is that of the state of Cosatu and its affiliates, and the trade union movement in general. The past 10 years has been characterised by a number of developments in the trade union movement that will require our particular attention as the SACP:

- There has been increasing casualisation of workers arising out of intensified neo-liberal restructuring of the workplace. This has resulted in the rapid decline and weakening of trade unions representing industrial workers in the private capitalist sector, including the significant weakening of the main pillar of Cosatu worker organisation, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Coupled with its weakening there is emerging a layer of leadership that is questioning not only the vanguard role of the Party, but the very wisdom of strengthening and building the SACP. The latter development threatens a rupture in the more than eight decades of close cooperation between communists and black workers (and particularly mineworkers);
- While there has been a seeming growth in public sector trade union membership over the past 10 years, this growth is levelling off for Cosatu affiliates for two reasons. Firstly, there is a limit to the further growth of the unions given decline in recruitment of new members and the relatively fixed size of the public service. Secondly,

Cosatu affiliates are beginning to feel the pressure from non-Cosatu unions in the public sector, notably from the Public Servants' Association (PSA). Another challenge facing public sector unions is the fact that they have not been immune to state capture, corruption and factionalist use of state institutions emanating particularly from the ANC itself;

- There has also been a significant decline in the training and political education of shop-stewards in the ranks of the trade union movement. Some signs of this are the lack of internal shop steward training on basic trade union skills, like negotiating, as well as on policy and broader political understanding. One reflection of this has been the significant decline in joint political schools between the SACP and Cosatu affiliates;
- The past 10 years have also seen a significant fractionation and splits in the trade union movement, with some Cosatu affiliates suffering more than two splits or breakaways. The formation of Saftu is an illustration of this point. But the major challenge is the lack of a comprehensive strategy either by Cosatu or the SACP itself on how to reach out to the splinter unions or federations, despite indications that workers from these unions want to return to Cosatu;
- We have therefore asked our CC Trade Union Commission to pay particular attention in preparing the Party to play its rightful role in re-building a stronger and more united progressive trade union movement. At the heart of this task is the necessity to build and assign a Party cadreship to work with the trade union movement.

Towards a Marxist analysis of state capture

The notion of “state capture” has acquired considerable currency in South Africa, and the Zondo Commission is explicitly a Commission into “state capture”. The SACP first used the term and played a leading

role in popularising it, while clearly understanding that it was a shorthand term for popular use. We have also sometimes preferred to speak of “corporate capture of the state”. In either case, we have been referring to something relatively specific in the South African reality, and we have not been referring to the many different forms that capitalism and capitalist class interests seek to, or actually hegemonise the state.

Some in the SACP have questioned the validity of the idea of “state capture”, arguing that it is non-scientific and un-Marxist. We have never claimed that on its own the term is scientific or particularly Marxist – but we must be very careful that we don’t throw out the essence of the matter and end up playing into the agenda of those who, like Jacob Zuma, dismiss the notion in order to exonerate their own industrial-scale, parasitic looting of public resources.

We need to provide a Marxist analysis of the specific realities that are loosely referred to as “state capture”.

First, and this is an old debate within Marxism-Leninism, we need to guard against the danger of a vulgar “instrumentalism” that might adhere to the notion of “capturing the state”. The state, in its ever shifting dynamic configurations, is not simply a neutral instrument that can be wielded by one class or another, depending on who has a hand on the assumed “commanding levers”, whether by winning elections (what Lenin described as vulgar parliamentarianism), or through “seizure of power” (which is why Lenin sometimes spoke of “smashing” the bourgeois state – ie: smashing the “instrument”).

Particularly in a capitalist society with a parliamentary democracy, there are many class and factional interests that penetrate and interact within the state, with capitalist interests (with their own diversity) always likely to be dominant if not unchallenged. This is why over the past two decades the SACP has consistently spoken, not of “capturing state power” but of transformational struggles to assert working class

and popular *hegemony* over all key sites of power, including a wide variety of state and broader public institutions and resources.

Secondly, in seeking to give a scientific analysis of the specific set of realities in South Africa that we loosely refer to as “state capture”, it is important to distinguish *our* use of the notion, from its recent application elsewhere. The idea of “state capture” was given prominence in the late-1990s by mainstream neo-liberal institutions studying the outcome of what they called “transitions” from socialist to “market” societies in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. See for instance, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (*Transition Report* 1999) and the World Bank (*Anti-corruption in transitions. A contribution to the policy debate*, 2000). These institutions were grappling with the reality that the dismantling of socialist societies had not produced the glowing capitalist outcomes their neo-liberal ideology had promised. While conceding that various forms of corruption exist in developed and “developing” capitalist countries, the neo-liberal institutions blamed “state capture” for the failures in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

In South Africa, we suggest that we should not use the term “state capture” to refer to all forms of capitalist-related corruption. For instance, the massive, industrial-scale fraud perpetrated in the Steinhoff saga must result in severe criminal punishment of those involved. But it is not helpful to collapse it into “state capture”.

We suggest that “state capture” in our context is best analysed and understood through the lens of what is, incontestably, a Marxist concept – “primitive accumulation”, and the relationship of “primitive accumulation” to the post-1994 ANC and state. In *Capital Marx* uses the concept of “primitive accumulation” to analyse how an emerging capitalist class acquired capital in the first place, prior to the actual development of surplus extraction from exploitative capitalist relations

of production. Huge hordes of gold and silver plundered from the New World, land expropriation without compensation of an Irish and later English peasantry, and much more, constituted a primitive accumulation of wealth that resourced capitalism and a new capitalist class.

In South Africa post-1994, the aspirant capitalist strata (without capital) acquired a degree of hegemony within the ANC and the state. Without going into too much detail here, schematically we can distinguish two varieties of primitive accumulation driven from within the ANC and state on behalf of these emergent aspirants:

BEE primitive accumulation

BEE primitive accumulation was an inherent part of the 1996 class project. In this version of primitive accumulation, state power is used to regulate (legally) and enforce BEE shareholding quotas in established corporations. The BEE shareholdings are typically “leveraged” – ie: indebted, with repayment based on the assumption that accruing dividends over a period of several years will pay off the debt. By 2010, Jenny Cargill estimated that BEE shareholders had acquired an estimated R500-billion, “far more...than in other key areas of socio-economic transformation, such as low-income housing and land redistribution”. Most of this R500-billion was not looted from the state or public entities but came largely from privately held (corporate) surplus that was diverted into indebted shares, rather than into job-creating productive investment or public assets and services. In other words, although it was largely “legal”, it represented a clear class choice that was unfavourable to the working class and popular masses, and therefore to the majority of black people (although it was described as black economic empowerment). Established monopoly capital with varying degrees of moaning, played along with this BEE primitive accumulation, seeing it as a better way of managing change without actually having to substan-

tially change. The new BEE elite was quickly absorbed, usually as passive and junior partners, into the life-styles of the established capitalist class. The ethos of primitive accumulation filtered all the way down to branch level with petty accumulation for micro-entrepreneurs. Steadily from the mid-1990s, the predominant reason for the existence of ANC organisational machinery shifted from popular struggle to a narrow electoralism, and then, in a further debasement, to winning elections to occupy office as a means of reproducing and expanding primitive accumulation.

The state capture version of primitive accumulation

First generation BEE was largely played out within the rules of the capitalist system. While non-market forces were used (state regulatory power), the empowerment followed the “rules” – BEE beneficiaries received indebted shares and were expected to repay the loan.

Generally, established monopoly capital played along with, and often actively promoted, this agenda and saw it as a key means to advance the interests of monopoly capital in general by stabilising capitalism in South Africa against radical threats.

However, for many reasons, this agenda proved unstable and unleashed many contradictions and rivalries within the ANC and new state institutions. Not all aspirant capitalist strata within the ANC could be accommodated within Mbeki’s inner BEE circle. What we describe loosely as “state capture”, is a second wave of accumulation using positions within the state. But this second wave no longer plays within the parameters of a capitalist rule of law. It involves direct looting (expropriation) of public resources (particularly those of key SOEs), aided and abetted by gangster-lumpen-capitalists – Kebble, Agliotti, the Gup-tas, the Watsons, the EFF’s Mazzoti, and the like. This is not in the interests of capital, or monopoly capital – quite the opposite. While for

the “state capture” networks, near-fatal looting of Eskom and Transnet is their core business, established capital (and the broader South Africa community, not least the working class and poor) requires functioning (mostly) publicly supplied energy and logistics systems.

That is why it has been possible (and essential) to build a multi-class patriotic front that includes the working class against “state capture” in which beneficiaries of the first (BEE) wave of primitive accumulation have played a leading role (Sipho Pityana is a prime example, but also Cyril Ramaphosa himself) along with mainstream monopoly capital (Busa, BLSA, etc.)

This broad anti-state capture front - within which the SACP has played, and must continue to play, a leading role –helped unseat Zuma as president, and helped to bring the country back from the constitutional and economic brink on which it was teetering. But the dangers remain.

Moreover, while vigilantly combating the Zuma-linked fight-back, the SACP has to contest the struggle within the anti-state capture front. Does the gathering defeat of the “state capture” platform simply lead to a return to the 1996 class project? Or do we use it to advance along the path of a serious national democratic transformation?

The current re-eruption of the Reserve Bank debate illustrates clearly what the SACP confronts.

The macro-economic debate – no to neo-liberalism, no to RET vulgarism

The agenda behind the ANC secretary general’s seemingly “radical” statements on the Reserve Bank and monetary policy should be clear. What the parasitic faction wishes to achieve, among other things, is the dismantling of the Reserve Bank’s capacity to monitor and control illicit capital outflows for Dubai and elsewhere. The looters want to dismantle the Reserve Bank’s oversight capacities, much as they partially

succeeded in eroding SARS under Moyane.

This is what lies behind the sustained attack on the Reserve Bank from those quarters – including the Public Protector’s over-reach on the Reserve Bank mandate, and the diversionary and pointless issue of calling for the Reserve Bank to be “nationalised”.

The SACP must continue to expose these matters while still insisting that Reserve Bank policies and practices are not sacrosanct and beyond constructive debate.

And this is where it is not just Magashule who is highly problematic. The arrogance and hysteria on display from Finance Minister Tito Mboweni and Reserve Bank Governor Lesetja Kganyago, along with much of the media commentariat, is out of order (and, in fact, contributes to further unsettling investors – the very ones whose interests the finance minister and Reserve Bank governor claim to be nursing. Kganyago, for instance, spoke of “the barbarians at the gate”. The Magashule-Mboweni tango runs the danger of closing down any constructive (and necessary) discussion on the macro-economic policy.

We are often told that the Constitution prescribes a narrow focus on inflation-targeting as the mandate of the Reserve Bank.

However, this is not entirely true. The exact wording of the relevant Constitutional clause (224 (1)) is: “The primary object of the South African Reserve Bank is to protect the value of the currency ***in the interest of balanced and sustainable economic growth in the Republic.***”

The neo-liberal advocates only get as far as the first half of that sentence. But the Constitution is clearly stating that protecting the value of the currency is ***not*** an end in itself – it must be subordinated to achieving balanced and sustainable economic growth. We manifestly do ***not*** have balanced and sustainable growth in South Africa. It is therefore entirely legitimate (and constitutional) to debate whether the rigid application of a 3-6% inflation target band is contributing to the grossly

imbalanced, unsustainable and low growth into which we are seemingly locked.

The neo-liberal advocates will argue that this is “populism” and will further argue that raising questions like this is interference in the constitutionally guaranteed “independence” of the Reserve Bank.

But this, too, is a deliberate misreading of the Constitution. Section 224 (2) of the Constitution reads: “The South African Reserve Bank, in the pursuit of its primary object, must perform its functions independently and without fear, favour or prejudice, **but there must be regular consultation between the Bank and the Cabinet member responsible for national financial matters.**”

And Section 225 of the Constitution reads: “The powers and functions of the South African Reserve Bank are those customarily exercised and performed by central banks, **which powers and functions must be determined by an Act of Parliament and must be exercised or performed subject to the conditions prescribed in terms of that Act.**”

Clearly the Constitution does **not** envisage Reserve Bank “independence” to mean that it is a free-floating power unto itself.

The requirement that there must be regular consultation with the Minister of Finance means that it is not the Reserve Bank that should develop macro-economic or even more narrowly monetary policy. That is the responsibility of a democratically elected government acting through a Minister of Finance. What the Constitution requires is that within the framework of government policy there should be no political interference exerted upon the Reserve Bank in deciding at a particular moment whether, for instance, to raise, lower or keep an existing interest rate. But this decision **must** be within the framework of government policy.

Furthermore, the Reserve Bank is subject to legislation passed by a

democratically elected Parliament. While the current Reserve Bank Act simply repeats the wording in the Constitution, there is absolutely no reason why this Act should not be amended to more clearly reflect the developmental responsibilities of the Reserve Bank.

Quantitative easing with South African characteristics

Many developed capitalist economies in the past decade have responded to the Great Recession (from 2007 onwards) through various forms of “quantitative easing”. This refers to central banks actively loosening money supply, typically through dropping interest rates to close to zero (and in some cases to zero). This encourages public, private and household spending and discourages saving. It therefore acts, in theory, as a stimulus to growth and job creation.

For various reasons, this form of quantitative easing is probably not feasible in South Africa.

However, there are various forms of more targeted “quantitative easing” and other forms of Reserve Bank intervention that should be urgently considered in South Africa. These include:

The Reserve Bank directing concessional credit to specific sectors (SMMEs, local cooperative banks). This directed “quantitative easing” could be done directly while working with Treasury and DTI, or through industrial financing institutions, for example the IDC.

The Reserve Bank (the “printer” of money) could “monetise” Rand-denominated debt. For instance, the Reserve Bank could purchase public debt (for instance in Eskom) held by the PIC, on condition that the PIC then invests the new cash in key productive areas (for instance, back into Eskom, making the PIC an investor, not a creditor).

These and other heterodox interventions need, of course, to be technically modelled and not just proclaimed as slogans. What is absolutely essential is that the SACP actively intervenes to ensure that macro-

economic debate is not reduced to a shouting match between looters who want to launder ill-gotten money, on the one hand, and arrogant, know-it-all neo-liberals defending an orthodoxy that is no longer practised in much of the world.

Grasping the nature of the challenge and key tasks in the revolution

In bringing together the implications of all of these factors, we need to properly identify and characterise the nature of the political challenge we face, and the tasks facing the SACP and the movement as a whole. The Central Committee also needs to do so to prepare for properly structured discussions by our structures in the lead up to our Special National Congress.

State capture as a form of parasitic capitalism has for a while been the most immediate threat facing our revolution. State capture has also opened our movement (and government) to counter-revolution in a manner that has not happened since our 1994 democratic breakthrough. The various terrains and manifestations of counter-revolution are:

- The factionalisation and destruction of the structures of the ANC, including attempts at destroying the Alliance by alienating its structures and leadership;
- The destruction of the capacity of the state to collect and disburse resources to address poverty, class inequalities and unemployment, for example by SARS and the South African Social Security Agency;
- The mortgaging of key state-owned enterprises which are critical means through which to transform our economy and drive a second more radical phase of our democratic revolution;
- The prospects and possibilities of the reunification of what we used to refer to as the new tendency, which is now located in the EFF, and in the parasitic elements within our own ranks. The new

tendency was united around its anti-communist and anti-working class positions, as socialism and the struggle of the working class constitutes a threat to its accumulation agenda;

- The sustained attack on the progressive sections of the leadership of the ANC as led by its President, Cde Ramaphosa, is a significant part of this offensive against the movement and its government;
- The capture and corruption of the criminal justice system to serve the interests of the parasitic element, and use of intelligence services, including former apartheid intelligence agents operating as private security companies, to attack and discredit sections of the leadership of the ANC and the Alliance;
- In so far as the goal of the National Democratic Revolution is that of addressing the needs of workers and the poor, this stands to undermine the achievement of these goals needs to be characterised as counter-revolution; and
- The evidence from all the investigations and commissions set up by government is not about some accidental and incidental happenings based on greed and corruption, but increasingly appears to be an elaborate plot to defeat our revolution.

Therefore, the most immediate task facing our revolution is to unite all the components of our movement and the mass of our people to defeat this counter-revolution. As part of this, there is an urgent need to defend and reclaim the ANC, and cleanse it of the counter-revolutionary elements, including using of membership and branch structures to pursue perverted goals that serve to bolster counter-revolution. Factionalism and gatekeeping have become key organisational defects that wittingly or unwittingly have become platforms for this counter-revolution.

Our commitment to build both a broader patriotic front and Left front(s) must also be located within this urgent task of defeating coun-

ter-revolution and counter-revolutionary activities.

Therefore the immediate tasks of all communists is to be active in all the structures of the ANC, as ANC members in their own right, to seek to rebuild the ANC as a people's movement and our main weapon in driving the National Democratic Revolution.

Perhaps the urgent foundation upon which we must defend our revolution from counter-revolution is that of focusing on intensified work in our communities. This is a clarion call for all communists to be community activists. The starting point for the activism must be to go back to the areas where we were campaigning during the elections to mobilise our communities to address the many problems and challenges they face. For example the SACP leadership must return to Met-simaholo in particular, and the Free State Province generally, to address the issue of incomplete houses, and seek to get to the bottom of these problems and to solve them.

The foundation upon which we must intensify community activism should include the following:

- The SACP local structures as the voting district-based branches;
- Revitalisation of the Know and Act in Your Neighbourhood Campaign;
- Campaign to address the crises of social reproduction in our communities (including gender based violence, building village and township economies); and
- Identify and strengthen the many positive organisational efforts in our communities, like women's participation in school governing bodies; community early childhood development centres and crèches; variety of sports organisation and activities; anti-poverty programmes run by local churches.

Community activism must also be a critical entry point to break gate-keeping and refocus ANC branches currently sitting aloof from

communities. Effective community activism and mobilisation will force any branches to open up and face to the realities our communities are faced. Communists and community activists must also be a platform for building co-operatives and embarking on other sustainable livelihoods activities, including pushing for set-asides for SMEs and co-operatives to be actualised. Communists as community activists must also be the bedrock upon which to take forward our 2019 Programme of Action to tackle problems and challenges of local government.

A critical question that we must discuss and take to our Special National Congress concerns the character of the SACP structures that we need in order to play our vanguard role in defending our revolution from counter-revolution and undertaking the pressing tasks of defending the ANC and rebuilding the progressive trade union movement. All this requires that as the Central Committee and provincial Party leadership structures we all play our role in guiding our membership and organising them into a force to drive the second, more radical phase, of our revolution. ●

KZN PEC POLITICAL REPORT

On revolution and counter-revolution

KZN SACP Political Report at the June Provincial Council meeting, titled 'Fight against infantile disorder, defeat opportunism and defend the working class and the party'

Emerging from the 2nd Central Committee of 2019, frank introspection and assessment of our current situation started to unfold.

The recent national general elections, the chaotic state of governance that has reached a near state of decay in some departments, public entities and enterprises, and municipalities in the last nine to 10 years depicts the dire situation of the movement and the state of our country. It is therefore befitting to talk of revolution and counter-revolution in the wake of the 2019 general elections. The sorry state of the ruling party, the ANC, which may be said to be worsened by the unsatisfactory state of its Alliance partners – the SACP, Cosatu and Sanco – tends to ring alarm bells concerning the state of our National Democratic Revolution.

Slowly, the situation in South Africa is degenerating to the one we are observing in Brazil and, if we are not careful, may slide into a Venezuelan type of crisis. The situation currently faced by South Africa is a confirmation of the prophetic warning by former President of the ANC, Cde OR Tambo, when he predicted more difficulties for the liberation movement once in power. What is currently taking place in South Africa can be explained in two ways, one reinforcing the other. It is a clear

demonstration of imperialism's post-liberation grand plan to safeguard its interests invested in over years of colonialism and apartheid through the activation of a counter-revolutionary machinery or war chest to appropriate liberation gains.

All indications are that the South African Communist Party is not immune to these counter-revolutionary crises. There are hot debates about how the Party is supposed to play its revolutionary vanguard role under these circumstances, and what is its stance or position in the competing forces for the control of the politico-socio economic landscape. There have been many questionable postures the Party is said to have undertaken in the last 10 to 15 years that need intense debate internally. The Central Committee report of June 2019 started to emit a positive sign of willingness to open space to interrogate and debate our position in these fast-changing circumstances, going towards our December 2019 Special Congress.

Of the many developing dynamics in the political space the biggest question is where does it leave the working class? There is a growing belief that the focus on the working class may be diminishing. There appears to be an over-emphasis on building the black middle class and on faction fights between the fractions of capital. In the public discourse there is an emerging narrative that says the left axis, meaning mainly Cosatu and the Party, are so preoccupied with these battles of the fractions of capital.

The struggle against petty-bourgeois ideology

The above-perceived phenomenon tends to germinate from petty-bourgeois influence in the ranks of the left. These petty-bourgeois ideas and tendencies are inflicting, or causing, tremendous damage and must be seen as a main reason for emerging difficulties in the SACP. These petty-bourgeois influences are said to be masked in many forms within

the Party and can be traced in some debates on state, power and in our manoeuvring for financial sustainability. This has also developed to be one of the main sources for attack on the Party and its leadership. Such attacks have now been sent out widely, beyond the Party membership and found their way to the Alliance partners and the opposition.

The struggle against petty-bourgeois ideology, confusions and wavering in the Party are now becoming of fundamental importance. All Communist parties have had to wage this struggle and the extent to which they have overcome petty-bourgeois influences is a measure of their ability to apply Marxism-Leninism and give sound leadership.

It is not the fact of being a critic that might bring one's position into question but the merit or otherwise of the criticism – do they build or destroy, unify or disrupt, educate or befuddle?

Such inner-party struggles can, but need not, be destructive. The democratic centralist structures of the Party provide the means for raising differing views, arguing them, and making decisions. As we argue the issues out, the way forward is being charted. Problems, backward ideas, errors will be discarded.

The current attack on the Party and its leadership and policies and decision-making focuses on four main areas:

- Building alliances (reconfigured, broad/ patriotic front or left/ popular front) and unity;
- The position and the role of the Party in electoral politics;
- How to characterise and interpret or view socio-economic changes currently taking place; and
- Democratic centralism.

Critics describe the policies they disagree with as new “revisionist and liquidationist tendencies” by the Party leadership. Yet most of them have appeared in Party documents, including the Party Programme, since the dawn of this democratic dispensation without any

such opposition from the members.

The views expressed by this minority have a potential to isolate our Party, turning it into a sect that is ineffectual. The people putting forward these ideas create theories divorced from the realities of life in South Africa today. They avoid real campaigns with real people in favour of “pure” struggles. They have no understanding of the “battle of ideas” which is a central feature of our work.

These isolationists describe the Communist Party’s policies and programmes in this way: prior to leading the working class, we must first unite this mythical and nebulous beast “the left” to fight for socialism. There is no attempt to define who this “left” might be. Who exactly is this mythical creature labelled “the left” that we need to unite prior to uniting the working class? In attempting to unite these differing groups ultimately we are forgetting the class we most of all need to attract, the working class. Instead of attempting to lead the working class to victory this ideology suggests that we must unite these largely middle class groups first, as if they will lead us to victory. Ultimately it will mean that we will dissolve our movement into the social democratic movement (meaning the ANC) and in the pursuit of reforms and parliamentary means to overthrow capitalism.

Regarding the “urgent need” to break the alliance with the ANC, KZN been firm that for now this ideology is incorrect. This focus on breaking the Alliance is a revisionist, class collaborationist policy in disguise because the focus is on participation in the social democratic struggle within the parliamentary system only, instead of winning the leadership of the working class to overthrow it. The Party must stand on its own. Or at the very least the Party should be standing with other like-minded Marxist organisations. This idea of a coalition type government, of a mishmash of left groupings and social democrats, is indicative of the reformist view that somehow the Party can alter the basis of

capitalism via participation in government.

These wild accusations from the members who are attacking our Party make a multitude of mistakes. They falsely claim that Party policy is to build left and progressive unity before other forms of unity, that its main purpose is to win elections, that a united front is the same as a popular front. So let's look at some of these matters.

Unity

The isolationists claim that there is no attempt to define who this "left" might be. We are talking about the ANC? The EFF? The BLFs, Azapos, PACs? The opportunists who are no longer members of our Party?

The Party is clear about what we meant about unity, be it of the left, people, or working class.

Left Unity is unity between the left forces aimed at building and strengthening the position of the left. For this purpose we define the "left" as being those forces which recognise the class struggle, fight the class struggle in the interests of the working class, and recognise that capitalist society must be replaced with a socialist society.

People's Unity unites forces across broader sections of society than the working class alone, drawing together the broadest array of forces exploited by capitalism. In fighting together for programmes in the interests of the working class and other social groups, a cohesive democratic unity can come into existence directed against the most reactionary big business circles.

Working class unity brings together the working class, which consists of the majority of the people. The united front of the working class means the establishment of unity in action by all sections of the working class in support of their economic and political interests. Building the united front of the workers means advancing policies, demands and slogans which workers will actively support and which will strengthen

the struggle and organisations of the working class.

The Party uses the term “left” in a precise way, to describe those who see the domination of our society by large corporations as being responsible for the economic, political and social crisis society faces.

The political left recognises the importance of the class struggle and takes it up on the side of the working class in fighting for a socialist solution to society’s problems.

There are left-wing trade unionists, peace activists, environmentalists and many others, but it would be wrong for us to describe as “left” all activists who fight oppression and injustice.

There are many “pro-people” organisations and individuals who support political reforms and progress and work for social justice, equality, democracy and a better society, yet don’t see the prime importance of the class struggle, the need for a socialist form of society, or understand the role the giant corporations play in society. Such organisations and individuals can be described as “progressive”.

Just as it is wrong to describe all activists as just “progressives”, it is equally wrong to describe them all as “left”.

The isolationists allege that the SACP wants to create left unity prior to uniting the working class.

You can search SACP documents one after another, but you will not find a single reference to any order in which these different forms of unity should be built.

What you do find are references to the dialectical relationship between the forms of unity and recognition that different demands and forms of activity will be required depending on the prevailing conditions, the form of unity and the participants in any particular activity or campaign. You will also find references to the importance of the leading role of the working class and the leading role of the Communist Party.

Alliances

Many sections of capitalist society are suffering under the growing power of the monopoly capital: the working class (including the unemployed), small business, small farmers, historically disadvantaged (black) people, professionals, the self-employed, and academic strata.

There is a large range of social and political issues facing all those mentioned above that remain unresolved. They include workers' rights, environmental protection, the battle against privatisation, defence of the public sector (health, education, transport, and housing), progressive tax reform (including taxing mining and others generating super-profits), and decentralisation to assist rural and informal settlement communities.

If we are to effectively fight back against this onslaught, the Communist Party believes a central issue is to build unity among the left and progressive forces, to mobilise the working class and its allies to substantially change the direction of the politics in the country. The many progressive individuals and groups are part of the political scene and won't go away. It is true some have taken anti-working class positions on some issues, but nonetheless, if the SACP doesn't work with them and help them develop a class outlook in a battle of ideas, who will?

The SACP some time ago adopted a strategy of building left and progressive unity to contribute to the creation of an alternative political force, with the working class at its core, strong enough to substantially change the direction of politics in South Africa.

This is a strategic approach to change that is shared by many communist parties around the world.

The political alternative is the name given to the complex of political forces who are prepared to change direction, to build struggles and fight for policies for the people, against the interests of the monopoly capital, against the pro-big business policies being foisted on us by gov-

ernments of all shades. The forces that form the political alternative can be seen in embryo now in some campaigns like Equal Education, Right to Know etc. The wide array of social forces and political groupings in various campaigns shows that co-operation around issues is not only possible but effective. When people with different political, religious, ethnic and occupational backgrounds join hands to achieve an objective that all agree on it is a powerful force to be reckoned with. The UDF is a testimony to this.

The working class must be at the core of this mass movement. The Party must win support for the ideas that more fundamental, more lasting change in the people's interest can be brought about if co-operation and united struggle are taken to a higher level.

Marx's observations in 1847 are interesting in this context: "Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The domination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have pointed out only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle." (Karl Marx *The Poverty of Philosophy*, 1874)

At the recent KZN winter school there was a call for all Party branches to become centres of political activity. This means a branch must be active with the people, it must be involved with the people in their struggles, it must be seen by the people as giving help and leadership to struggles that people are involved in and concerned about.

Working at community or local level will necessarily mean working with people with whom we have ideological differences. Working in this way allows us to be more effective in winning reforms for the people and also gives us opportunities to speak to a wider audience, an

opportunity to argue our position and raise politics to a higher level.

Our job is to make an alliance of left and progressive forces work. We have no other choice.

The SACP must see the task of uniting the left/progressive organisations and individuals as a major objective in the present period. With this in mind, we must see the main aim of the Party in the present situation as working to develop left unity and working class unity. The development of a united front of the working class will greatly assist building the broader people's front unity that is required for the progressive forces to successfully achieve the anti-monopoly, anti-imperialist democratic government that we identify as the first stage of the second more radical transformation of the economy and revolutionary change.

While it is possible for the various forms of unity to be developed simultaneously, a people's front will not succeed as a contribution to the revolutionary development of society without being based upon the unity in action of the working people which must be at the centre of the broader form of people's unity.

While never ceasing to place the main emphasis on the development of working class unity, it is necessary to build a left-oriented, politically progressive people's front strong enough to challenge and break the likes of EFF and DA. This alternative must be the aim of, and arise out of, the demands and mass actions of the working people and other classes and social groups that oppose monopoly domination.

The isolationists ask: "What did the Party intend to achieve in this alliance with the reconfigured Alliance", citing the recent exclusion of the Party leadership in ANC NEC and the non-deployment of its many leaders in national and provincial legislatures. They claim that ANC "alienate the workers by silly, adventurist and sometimes even criminal activities".

Let's think for a moment about why Lenin admitted Trotsky and his whole group into the Bolshevik organisation. Lenin was certainly not naïve; he had raised criticism of Trotsky before. In fact, he was committed to maintaining the strength of the movement while simultaneously recognising that ideological struggle would continue. Working together means changing together. The key question is: change in what direction? That depends on who is best equipped to win the battle of ideas.

We are confident that the SACP can and must win, and will win. Perhaps the isolationists do not have the same confidence when they try to run away from the battle of ideas by repeating the dogma of working class, working class and no one else.

But let's be clear. We are talking about the battle of ideas within alliances. Of course that is not the only arena in which we need to win the battle of ideas. We need to do it in all areas of our work – the trade unions, financial sector campaign, service delivery, environmental campaigns, within community organisations, ANC structures etc. However, since the isolationists seem intent on spreading disinformation about SACP, we must stress that we are not raising the possibility of amalgamation of the SACP with groups on the left. We are firm and steadfast on our independence.

Elections

It would be a mistake to interpret the concept of the reconfigured Alliance as just an electoral alliance. Our efforts to build a reconfigured Alliance have been expressed in different campaigns, including at the 2019 general elections. This has led some people to falsely accuse the SACP of thinking that real socio-economic change can be achieved by parliamentary means. This is nonsense and has never been SACP policy.

The Communist Party programme says explicitly that parliamentary

work is important provided that it is combined with struggle by the people outside parliament.

This is not some revisionist or liquidationist “error” or “tendency” that slipped through at congresses. This policy has been in the Party programme for years.

Without a mass movement, achievements in parliament by left and progressive members would be very limited. It’s a bit like a union fighting a battle in a bargaining council without mobilising its members outside. Work among the working class and in the mass movement should be the primary focus of the Party’s activity: elections can be an important form of struggle, an opportunity to build unity, and take the programmes of the Party to broader audience.

How should we approach electoral co-operation with the ANC? If we stand for election in broad coalitions, left popular or broad fronts, will we lose our independence as a party, be limited in what we can do, and not be able to express our Party policy?

Certainly not. There may be some limits but there are also benefits, if we make our work in alliance successful.

If we say we want to co-operate to build a new alliance, a reconfigured Alliance for change, we have to show we are genuine and prepared to do some selfless work. We are not in it to see what we can get out of it for ourselves. Building trust among the working class is extremely important in building support for our Party. Our aim is to win leadership of the working class, to see that the working class “constitutes itself as a class for itself”. (Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* 1874)

The Communist Party

There will be no strong left and progressive political alternative without a strong Communist Party.

A reconfigured Alliance or political alternative will not be built if we

try to play down the Party, or hide its face. Successful work requires our influence to be much greater so our ideas gain acceptance by wider numbers of people.

That will not happen if we do not work with and engage in the battle of ideas with other social forces.

We need a strong Party presence in the mass movement because an advanced perspective of left and progressive unity combined with good policies will be a strong unifying force, enabling a more long-lasting change of direction of politics in South Africa.

The working class and the people

The working class in South Africa has the leading role to play in building an alternative political force for real change because of its central social position, its strength, organisational capacity and experience in struggle.

The SACP must seek to involve and give leadership to the working class in struggle for its demands. We must also seek to promote the struggles of progressive and community organisations. This is not a dilemma. We do not have to choose. The two processes are not contradictory; they should be complementary.

Recognition of the primary role of the working class is sometimes elevated into the idea that communists should only work with working class issues. This is a mistake the isolationists are making.

The SACP's recognition of and representation of social forces other than the working class does not mean that the Party loses its class orientation and therefore the reason for its existence.

These mistaken views misrepresent the manner in which our Party has tackled the issues of health, education, financial sector, land issues, and corruption. We have consistently said, for example: "Let the bank serve the people". We did not say "let the banks serve the working class".

Climate change is a vital issue for the working class but again we do not restrict our struggle to within the confines of the working class movement. We must join forces with a range of social forces, all with the common aim of taking action to reduce emissions and develop sustainable, renewable energy sources.

Health, education, housing, social welfare etc are massive issues for the working class. They embrace issues of government budget allocation, privatisation, user-pays, exploitation, the reserve army of labour, and the role and responsibilities of governments.

Such issues are issues for the working class; they are issues for the people; they are issues for the Communist Party. There is no contradiction involved. Those who present them as contradictory will only cause division between the working class and the people. Can the problems of these areas be solved outside of the arena of working class struggle? Does anyone seriously suggest this?

The isolationists suggest that the focus must be on those issues which directly concern the working class, with emphasis given to issues associate with labour exploitation. The division of issues into “working class” and “people’s” issues is born of metaphysical thinking, cuts the working class off from major political battles and leads to economism.

Economism

Lenin was critical of what is called “economism”, the idea that only issues related to the economic struggle of the working class (that is, their immediate workplace issues), should be taken up.

Lenin was convinced the economists were wrong. He branded their view, that the economic struggle was the best way to involve the masses in the political movement, as “erroneous and reactionary”.

It’s not that Lenin thought a wages struggle or a “factory exposure” to be wrong in principle, but when prosecuted as purely economic strug-

gles, all the workers learned was to sell their labour on better terms and to fight the purchases over a purely commercial deal.

Lenin thought it necessary to organise the political education of the working class on the basis of the exposure of all aspects of the existing system. Communist propaganda should expose police oppression and “autocratic outrages” in all spheres of life, be they industrial, civic, scientific etc. Lenin wanted every conscious worker to react to the “tyranny of landlords, corporal punishment of peasants, bribery among officials, harassment by the police, the regimentation of soldiers, and the persecution of students”. Workers must develop a responsibility towards all oppressed strata.

According to Lenin, the ideal communist should not be like the trade union secretary but “the tribune of the people, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects; who is able to generalise all these manifestations and produce a single picture of police violence and capitalist exploitation; who is able to take advantage of every event, however small, in order to set forth before all his socialist convictions and his democratic demands, in order to clarify for all and everyone the world-historic significance of the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat.”

Such an extensive understanding and practice of “political education” benefitted not only the workers, but also the broad masses, highlighting a most important aspect of communist work – what we today call “building alliances” with non-working class sections of the population.

The historical experience of the working class movement and the many successful struggles for socialism illustrate this point. The Bolshevik Revolution itself was built on the demands of Peace, Bread and Land. They were issues for all the oppressed people struggling against the Kerensky government, the capitalist class it represented and the

remnants of the autocracy. The Socialist Revolution was led by, but not won by, the working class on its own.

The process of change

It is universally understood that the transformation of the economic base of society from private monopoly control over the means of production to social forms of ownership – including state, municipal, co-operative and other forms – cannot be accomplished overnight. The term “by degrees” comes directly from the Communist Manifesto itself. But by how many degrees and of what duration between each step or phase of transformation?

The SACP is of the view that society will change from its present capitalist mode of production towards socialism through a series of stages. Society will progress through an anti-monopoly anti-imperialist democratic stage prior to the working class winning power and creating a socialist state. Initially – and in South Africa today we are at the NDR stage – the working class and other progressive social forces beginning to take control of political life and the economy to introduce measures to alleviate some of the worst features of the capitalist system, colonialism and apartheid. These changes will take a considerable time to bring about, as more and more of them are introduced and consolidated, the present dictatorship of capital will gradually be eroded and the power of the working class will begin to expand and develop.

The ruling class will resist and change, any challenge to its power, using all the means at its disposal. This could result in setbacks or rapid progression in the process of change. This is exactly what we are presently experiencing in South Africa.

Democratic centralism

The principles of democratic centralism are the organisational princi-

ple of all communist parties and arise out of the revolutionary tasks of the Party. Their abandonment would turn a communist party into, at best, a liberal democratic or reformist party incapable of waging any revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

Dialectics is the disclosing of the contradiction of a single whole. The unity of opposites refers to the internal contradictions within a single unified and indivisible whole. It does not refer to the drawing together or combination of two separate elements.

Democratic centralism is two separate and separated processes. It is a single integrated whole and the proper observance of the party's democratic centralist practices will and is intended to strengthen the Party at all levels.

The main principles of democratic centralism are set out in our Party's Constitution.

We are currently observing an increase in our Party of the violation of principle of democratic centralism. There appear to be some groupings or circles developing whose main preoccupation is to challenge the leadership or the authority of the leadership. The people attacking our Party present democratic centralism as a "balance" between democracy on the one hand and centralism on the other. A balance inevitably implies two poles, two weights to be measured against one another. Hence, democratic centralism approached in this way divides what is a dialectical unity.

Having divided democratic centralism into two components, the next step is to pose one against the other. Then it becomes possible to "award" democracy to the rank and file and centralism to the leadership and to set the membership against the leadership.

They allege that there has been a long standing tradition that any member of the SACP has the right to approach any member of the Central Committee regarding their concerns in relation to the Party, or

in order to have something tabled at a Central Committee meeting.

This is dangerous nonsense. These grouping or circle critics are trying to replace the right to “address any proposal, statement, criticism or appeal of any Party organisation” with the right to lobby individual members of Party committees, to bypass and undermine the democratic centralist structures of the Party. And they try to do this by reference to a “tradition” that only individualists like themselves have tried to inflict on our Party.

The characteristic features of this grouping, which has built itself overtime into a circle within the Party, are as follows:

- Anti-authority;
- Demand for absolute freedom to do as they please;
- Inclination to mysticism (mystery-mongering, obscurantism, belief in miracles) and to aestheticism (assessment of the world in artistic terms);
- Adherence to the principle of a free federation of autonomous single groups;
- Subscribing to “ideology of power struggle” among individuals (to them organisation is a free federation of autonomous single groups and individuals);
- Adherence to the principle of making the revolution “here and now”; and
- They tend to decorate their innocuous little actions with a torrent of revolutionary words, sometimes on the verge of downright absurdity.

Whatever they are doing they subject themselves to a notion that says “start not for the others, but together with the others, for yourself, here and now, the revolution”.

As the SACP we must wage a fierce struggle against this individualism. The Party of the proletariat cannot allow its member to do or not

to do as they momentary like. The proletarian individuals, who, on the basis of their class consciousness, represent a qualitatively higher level of the individual than the bourgeois individual, subject themselves to voluntary discipline. They debate within the party's collective or with the entire class on the basis of inner-party democracy by way of open and honest criticism and self-criticism.

We defend the revolution, defend the Party!



98TH ANNIVERSARY

What is the vanguard role of the SACP?

With the ANC largely missing in action in broad movement struggles to tackle state capture and defend democracy, the SACP has had to step into the breach, argues **Jeremy Cronin**. But is it at strategic cost to the struggle for socialism?

On the occasion of the 98th anniversary of our Party and in the present very complex South African situation, it is entirely appropriate that we ask the question: What is the vanguard role of the SACP? We should answer that question not just in general terms, but in the concrete reality of our present situation.

Before entering into a more theoretical intervention on the vanguard role of the SACP in the current situation with the airwaves burning with debates about the Public Protector, and party funding, and state capture, and allegations of 30-year conspiracies against Jacob Zuma by the CIA, MI6 and apartheid-era spies, let me begin with a mundane, but typical snap-shot from the daily life of working class South Africans. It's a typical experience told to me this past week.

Mrs N's Story

Mrs N has turned 60. On Thursday, she went to the Sassa offices in Gugulethu to apply for an old-age pension. She lives in Heideveld, so the taxi-fare was a relatively modest R10. But R10 is R10. Arriving early, she found a long queue outside. Although it was rainy, fortunately

there was a roof along the outside passageway that provided some shelter. But there was no seating. She enquired where she should stand for a pension application. She was told that there was only one queue for all Sassa matters whether pension applications, or for lost cards, or for child support grants, or disability applications. She was told that once inside, she would be directed to the correct counter. Along with 80-year olds and disability applicants on crutches, she stood in line for three-and-a-half hours before getting into the office building. There a Sassa queue manager told her: “Come back next week. New pension applications are only handled on Mondays”.

Welcome to the post-apartheid public sector and its interface with working class citizens.

In recounting this experience, Mrs N compared it with what happens in a private bank (Capitec, in her case). As you enter, she told me, there is someone asking you what you need. The person checks whether you have all the required documents. They then direct you to the right counter. Mrs N is savvy enough to know that the bank takes her money, while hopefully sometime soon she will receive a pension from Sassa. Still, she wonders why the public sector treats her, and probably millions of others, with such careless disdain.

Let me pause here. I will come back to Mrs N right at the end of this intervention.

Le Duan

Writing in 1973, one of the great leaders of the Vietnamese revolution, (he was the Party general secretary between 1960-1986), Le Duan, reflected¹ on the new challenges confronting the Vietnamese Party now that it was in government. “There is a big leap forward from the struggle to seize power to being a Party in power,” he writes. In particular, his concern was with what he described as the dangers of “degeneration

and backsliding” of cadres.

Le Duan approaches the challenge in a typically dialectical manner and on the basis of three elements – *cadres*, the *Party line*, and *organisation*. Cadres, he writes, are both a cause and an effect. It is cadres who, collectively, help to develop the Party line, but they are also the product of that line.

“A wrong line will take cadres away from a correct direction, throw confusion into their ranks, and push numbers of them into wrongdoing ...a wise political line is the pre-condition for the existence of good cadres. It is quite impossible to have good cadres if the line is wrong.”

A similar relationship applies to organisation and the line – the appropriate organisational character of a vanguard Party, or a broad movement, is not a timeless matter, but depends on the correct line for a given conjuncture. Likewise, the development of effective cadres is dependent on the appropriate organisation.

“Wherever the Party branch and committee are rickety, the Party members and cadres find their fighting strength reduced and are prone to degeneration and backsliding. Party cadres and members are at the same time the effect and the cause. However, even if this or that individual [think Ace Magashule] is the cause of the shakiness of the organisation, the question still remains essentially a question of organisation (...) **That is why, in any case, we must proceed from organisation to examine and resolve the question...** That is the principled method of work.”

Le Duan is writing in a very different time in which the victory of the Vietnamese people against French colonialism, US imperialism, and local reaction, seemed to herald the unstoppable forward advance of radical national liberation movements (including our own), paving the way for direct if complex advances into socialism.

Our situation and our global conjuncture in 2019 are quite different.

Nevertheless, I believe Le Duan's rich dialectical understanding of the inter-relationship between cadre development (and/or degeneration), the Party line, and organisation provides a very valuable approach to understanding our own current tasks and challenges.

So, what is the vanguard role of the SACP in South Africa in 2019?

The Party and the national democratic struggle

Since at least the late 1920s, the Party has appreciated programmatically (with varying degrees of clarity) that the role of the Party needs to be understood in the context of a struggle for the liberation of the nationally oppressed black majority. Which is to say, that the Party's role cannot be divorced also from the organisational and ideological challenges of building and sustaining not just a vanguard socialist party, but also a broad national movement.

As we address the question of the Party's role in the present we need to ask: Do we have a broad national movement? If so, what is its state and capacity?

In late June at a campus-based event in Johannesburg, Jacob Zuma was the keynote speaker. His theme was the role of the ANC Youth League in the present. Zuma used the occasion, according to a *City Press* report, to urge the ANCYL "to back a president who is willing to place the plight of ordinary South Africans first and not one who is more concerned about how the implementation of policies agreed upon in party conferences would affect investors." No prizes for guessing against whom Zuma was rabble-rousing.

It is an open secret the Zuma aligned state capture faction, as the key component of their desperate fight-back campaign, is seeking to unseat Ramaphosa by portraying him as a president unwilling to implement supposedly cast-in-stone resolutions of the ANC's national conference. "Expropriation without compensation" and "the nationalisation of the

Reserve Bank” are among the booby traps they have set in place. This, according to the faction, is the ANC’s “line”.

Although the state capture faction presents these as policy, they have often become little more than territorial markers, like spray-painted gang tags on ghetto walls, based on resolutions forced through in highly disputed circumstances at the ANC’s December 2017 national conference. And yet they have a following. Even the Public Protector momentarily joined the gig, weighing in, far outside of her mandate, instructing Parliament to change the Constitution to allow for the nationalisation of the Reserve Bank. So how did these two largely peripheral issues in the broader scheme of things acquire such iconic, act-of-faith status?

Part of the answer lies, of course, in the legitimate sense of popular anger and frustration out there at persisting levels of poverty and unemployment. Simplistic slogans that can be pinned to a hash-tag become rallying points, offering instant, if deceptive, hope.

But how could this happen organisationally? And here a further part of the answer lies in the unresolved organisational character of the ANC. At least since 1994, the ANC has been wrestling with the question of what kind of organisation it should be. A liberation movement? A political party? Something in between?

The ANC as a mass movement

It was only in the late-1940s and the subsequent decade that the ANC really acquired a mass character and assumed leadership of a still wider movement, the Congress Alliance.

Things changed dramatically with the banning of the ANC (and PAC) in 1960 and the subsequent turn to an armed struggle. The switch from a broad movement to clandestine action was, of course, not easy. Tens of thousands of publicly exposed ANC members and supporters were

rounded up by the apartheid regime throughout the 1960s. The organisation was badly disrupted.

In the 1970s the ANC re-grouped mostly in exile, with considerable help from its ally the SACP. The bulk of its several thousand strong exiled membership was in the armed wing, MK. Apart from soldiers there were also administrators and diplomats. Even in exile strict discipline and clandestine methods of operation were essential. To all intents the ANC became a cadre-party of “professional revolutionaries”, both in exile and in the tenuous underground units within the country. In these circumstances, partly under the influence of its SACP ally and partly out of sheer survival necessity, the ANC adopted a Leninist-style “democratic centralist” code of discipline and organisation.

In this period the ANC still regarded itself, correctly in my view, as a movement, a national liberation movement – distinguishing its relatively small cadre from its undoubted and growing mass support at home.

With the launch of the UDF in 1983, this mass support found expression in an organisational shape that, more properly speaking, could be described as a movement. (It was a development, by the way, that was strongly influenced by an ANC-leadership visit to Vietnam and engagement with comrades that side). The UDF, as such, was not a membership organisation or political party. There were no UDF branches, for instance. It was a broad and sometimes fractious front of student, women, rural, civic, worker and faith-based organisations pursuing their local and sectoral struggles and developing organically policy perspectives related to these struggles. There was no attempt to develop or force through detailed UDF policy (nationalising the Reserve Bank, for instance) on its sprawling affiliated formations. There was general support for the Freedom Charter and unity was forged around specific campaigns – opposition to the tricameral parliament and black local

authority elections, for instance.

With the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 and the return of exiles new challenges emerged. What organisational form should the now legal ANC assume? In much of the commentary about the ANC of this period a sharp distinction gets made between the returning exiles and the so-called “inziles”. While the distinction is often over-drawn, there is some truth in it.

Many returning exiles, with Mbeki a key personality (but Hani an important exception), favoured a modernising, managerialist, ready-to-govern ANC with a leading cadre of professionals modelled somewhat on their exile experience. They favoured the winding down of the UDF and the absorption of its diverse sectoral and locally-based affiliates into the ANC and ANC-aligned centralised membership organisations – the ANCYL, the ANCWL and SANCO. On the other hand, many, not all, of those emerging from the mass democratic movement sought to retain the more localised, participatory, social movement character of struggle.

Part of the debates over direction and organisational culture came to a head, at least by proxy, at the ANC’s first post-unbanning national conference in 1991. It was personalised around who would be elected deputy president – Mbeki or Hani? Faced with the prospect of a divisive contest, the problem was solved by getting the two leading candidates not to contest, persuading a reluctant Walter Sisulu to assume the deputy presidency of the ANC. Which is to say, the problem was not solved, merely displaced.

Fast-forward to the present. The ANC is striving to achieve the impossible, to simultaneously be a mass membership formation with some 700 000 loosely recruited members and a vanguard party of cadres. These aspirations collide against each other in the actual reality on the ground. Since at least Kgalema Motlanthe’s time as ANC secretary gen-

eral, ANC conferences have repeatedly raised concern about an internal culture of factionalism, money politics, gatekeeping, manipulation of membership lists, and corruption. The imperative of organisational renewal has become a mantra, but most solutions focus on transforming a membership of hundreds of thousands into “disciplined cadres”, through improving membership morality, better political education, and re-reading the booklet, *Through the eye of the needle*.

These worthy pedagogical aspirations collide with the actual politics that branch-level members all too often are schooled in, the politics of factional lists and the pursuit of tenders. We now know (thanks to the otherwise disgraceful Public Protector’s report) that hundreds of millions of Rands were spent on ONE of the 2017 ANC presidential candidate’s campaigns. No doubt the NDZ campaign had an even larger war-chest.

How does *Through the eye of the needle* relate to this massive spending? It is like a feather in a whirlwind.

Democratic centralism that had once served as a survival code has degenerated into demagogic authoritarianism. And so, with Ramaphosa no doubt in his sights, Ace Magashule can say: “when you belong to an organisation you have no mind of yours. You must speak the collective positions and objectives of this organisation.” (*Sunday Times*, 31 May 2019).

Moneyed factionalism has now captured the notion of “democratic centralism” for its own purposes, so that Jacob Zuma and Ace Magashule (who are way off the Richter scale on Le Duan’s measure for degenerate cadres) can piously invoke organisational discipline as part of their fight-back agenda to unseat president Ramaphosa and to discredit honest comrades like Pravin Gordhan and Derek Hanekom.

How did the ANC end up in such dire straits?

As Le Duan might say: Zuma and Magashule are both cause and ef-

fect. To understand degenerate cadres we need to understand the two other elements at play – organisation and the strategic line.

The role of Mbeki

In April 1995, on the occasion of the first anniversary of South Africa’s breakthrough democratic election, then deputy State president Thabo Mbeki gave an interview to *The Star*. In the course of this since forgotten interview, he was asked an inevitable question: How long do you think the ANC alliance will last?

Mbeki didn’t answer that question directly, at least not what was clearly intended by the question – namely, how long will the ANC’s alliance with the SACP endure? Instead, Mbeki spoke about the ANC itself. He said that as South Africa’s new democracy “normalised”, he expected that the ANC would naturally evolve into its component parts, a liberal centrist party, a social democratic party, and so forth. (He didn’t even bother to acknowledge the existence of the SACP). It was not clear how soon he thought this would happen, but it was implied it might be relatively early, or perhaps by the time of the 1999 elections, or shortly thereafter.

In 1995 Mbeki’s vision of the ANC was narrowly *electoralist*. In the past, the ANC had often described itself as “the parliament of the people”. In Mbeki’s 1995 perception, the ANC would therefore from within itself give birth to an assumed “typical” bourgeois liberal “multi-party” parliamentary arrangement.

If most of us have forgotten it by now, Mbeki himself appeared to have erased the interview from his mind just four years after having given it. Or perhaps he was remembering it with some discomfort in November 1999. Either way, speaking now as the elected State President to the annual national conference of the Black Management Forum in that year, he told his audience: “The distinguished delegates

will remember that at some point during the life of our first democratic government, there was much ado about when the ANC might transform itself from a liberation movement into a party.”²

Then, with a characteristic sarcastic turn, he proceeded: “As so often happens in our country, because this seemed to be a clever thought, it became somewhat of a fad that each time anyone of us appeared in public, the clever people, or those who thought they were clever, would ask – when will you transform yourselves into a party! (...) Frankly, I still do not understand both why the clever people thought they should pose this question and what, in any case, the question means.”

(Jacob Zuma wasn’t the first to scornfully refer to “the clevers”.)

But the context in which Mbeki advanced his renewed commitment in 1999 to the ANC as a “movement” and not several electoral parties in gestation, is telling. This is how he argued:

“Because racism lives, the struggle continues!” [Note – he is now portraying the struggle as a struggle against “racism”, and not an embedded political economy premised on the national oppression of the majority]. “Because of that, the ANC must remain what it has been for many decades, a movement for the elimination of the legacy of the system of racism...**A critical part of that project (...) is the deracialisation of the ownership of productive property (...)** As part of the realisation of the aim to eradicate racism in our country, we must strive to create and strengthen a black capitalist class.”

This might at first bear a passing resemblance to the reform process unleashed in the late 1970s in China by Deng Xiaoping which, among other things, led to the development of a patriotic bourgeoisie under the tight discipline of the CPC – a national bourgeoisie that played a role in modernising the country, in developing the forces of production, in producing an Alibaba and a Jack Ma, or another technological giant, Huawei.

But this wasn't Mbeki's vision at this point. It was simply a question of de-racialising existing wealth.

He went on: "Because we come from among the black oppressed, many among us feel embarrassed to state this goal as nakedly as we should. Our lives are not made easier by those who, seeking to deny that poverty and wealth in our country continue to carry their racial hues, argue that wealth and income disparities among the black people themselves are as wide as disparities between black and white....I would like to urge, very strongly, that we abandon our embarrassment about the possibility of the emergence of successful and therefore prosperous black owners of productive property [we all remember Smuts Ngonyama's notorious statement "I didn't struggle to be poor", but we all forget who urged precisely this kind of attitude] and think and act in a manner consistent with **a realistic response to the real world**. As part of our continuing struggle to wipe out the legacy of racism, we must work to ensure that there emerges a black bourgeoisie whose presence within our economy and society will be part of the process of the deracialisation of the economy and society."

And then, in the conclusion to his speech, he turned to a significant member of the audience: "I am glad to see Comrade Cyril Ramaphosa here today and look forward to hearing what he will say. Earlier this year, before the elections we agreed that we would meet – government and black business to assess the whole project of black economic empowerment and try to find ways to move forward in a meaningful fashion. The work that he and his colleagues are doing, about which he will speak this morning, is critical to that assessment, which must also seek to answer the question – how do we promote the formation of a black bourgeoisie which will itself be committed and contribute to black economic empowerment, broadly understood?"

Four things are to be noted:

- Mbeki is reducing the NDR to a struggle against “racism” or a “racist system” – without explaining the inter-linkages between the particular path-dependency and character of South Africa’s capitalist political economy and national oppression. So, for him, the struggle has simply become a struggle to “deracialise” the **existing** structure, not the transformation of that structure. He presents this as “**a realistic response to the real world**”, as opposed, presumably to the straw man of “socialist fantasies” (or, as he put it in this speech, the view that “the issue of the disparity in wealth [in SA] is purely a class question.”) [who has ever argued that??].
- He clearly believes that there could be such a thing as a stand-alone “black capitalist class” in SA.
- Clearly, Mbeki’s about-turn in arguing that the ANC should be a “movement” is clearly now linked to the project of “creating a black capitalist class”, and
- The appropriate organisational form in which to advance this strategic line is the ANC as a “movement” – providing the bridge between the “state” and “black business”.

This “movement” is also the form in which peace is to be made with Mbeki’s political rival – Cyril Ramaphosa. Having been displaced from having a shot at the ANC and country’s presidency, Mbeki (speaking as government) is now offering Ramaphosa (as black business) an olive branch, as well as a task. Please tell us how the promotion of a so-called “black capitalist class” will also promote “black economic empowerment, broadly understood.” [Mbeki doesn’t himself provide an answer this absolutely critical question – it is an answer, which I suggest, we are all still waiting for.]

By opening up the ANC as a transmission belt between the aspira-

tions of black capitalists and the state, you are opening up the danger of convert the ANC into an auction house, a free-for-all market place.

To revert to Le Duan.

What we see here is the announcement of a new party political strategic line: the promotion of a “black capitalist class” as a key component of the NDR.

As Le Duan would have predicted, this wrong Line and this distorted Organisational version of a movement, would inevitably produce a degenerate cadreship.

Back in 1973 Le Duan did note:

“Of course, in such situations there are always those who are alert enough to tell right from wrong and are able to defend the truth. But to bring the movement back on to the right path, the revolution must pay what is sometimes a very high price, including in terms of cadres, the most valuable asset of the revolution.”

I have dwelt on Mbeki’s November 1999 speech to the BMF because we can see here the origins of what was later to become the plague of state capture which now dominates our present reality.

State capture

The Political Report to the SACP’s June 2019 Central Committee meeting (published separately in this issue of AC) deals extensively with the question of “state capture” and I will not repeat in any detail the analysis contained there. Basically, the CC political report characterises “state capture”, in the sense in which the SACP has sought to use the term, as a form of “primitive accumulation”, for emerging and aspirant black capitalist strata. The concept of “primitive accumulation” was developed by Marx to explain how the huge wealth required to launch capitalism in the first place was amassed through a violent process, lasting over centuries of wealth and asset expropriation on a huge scale,

from the colonial world and from an independent peasantry.

Gold and silver from South America, privatised land that had been commonage in Europe, and much more, was the original wealth-accumulation “outside” of capitalism proper, that fuelled the development of capitalism as a system based on the expropriation of surplus labour from “free” proletarians selling their labour-power on the market.

Mbeki’s “black capitalists” were, initially, capitalists without capital. Essentially BEE was the form in which a process of “primitive” (or perhaps better “primary” – to use a more accurate translation of Marx’s German word) capital accumulation was engineered on behalf of these aspirant capitalists. As the CC political report correctly states, we can distinguish schematically speaking two phases in this primitive accumulation process.

BEE – the first phase of primitive accumulation

The first phase, broadly associated with the Mbeki presidency, was accumulation through state-regulated requirements placed on existing capital, to accord percentages of black shareholding in major companies. By and large, this was a “legal” process, albeit with a particular class-character to its legality. BEE beneficiaries became shareholders on the basis of highly leveraged (that is, indebted) shares. The theory was that the shares would be paid off over time, perhaps over a period of five years, through the diversion of dividends to cover the debt. Of course, this assumed that dividends and the stock market more generally would continue to grow handsomely – a false assumption that created many pressures and which played a part in the second phase of primitive accumulation.

Established monopoly capital in South Africa, by and large, played along with this BEE primitive accumulation process. It was a way of building a buffer black stratum against more transformative demands.

Moreover, the emergent black stratum had useful connections to the ANC dominated government, and it had a vested interest in capitalist profitability. Writing in 2010, one of the major proponents of BEE, Jenny Cargill found that some R500-billion of surplus had been diverted into BEE deals – far more than had been spent on developmental programmes like housing, or land reform. That was R500-billion that could, in theory at least, have been invested into a job-creating productive economy.

So, although this first phase of primitive accumulation was, generally, “legal” – it represented a clear class choice in favour of capital and against the working class and broader popular strata.

Of course, we need to be careful about being overly schematic. During the Mbeki years there were BEE deals that were, at the very least, on the borderline of legality, including the use (and abuse) of worker pension funds in the PIC to fund dubious deals like Smuts Ngonyama’s Elephant Consortium.

The second phase of primitive accumulation – state capture

For various reasons this first phase of primitive accumulation proved to be unstable, and it created high levels of conflict, rivalry and factionalism within the ANC and state. Not all aspirant black capitalists (and there were many) could be accommodated. This was part of the context in which Jacob Zuma assumed presidency of the ANC in 2007. The global capitalist crisis from 2008 created further pressures on indebted BEE shareholders, not least in the mining sector. In 2009 Zuma became state president, and this marked the beginnings of the full-blown state capture process.

Again, schematically, in the earlier part of Zuma’s first administration (2009-2014), the focus was considerably on building a “stay-out-of-jail” fortress. The focus was on subverting the key intelligence and broader criminal justice system. This included dealing with the NPA

and SARS. However, in time, with the criminal justice system badly weakened, attention shifted to “state capture” primitive accumulation with, in particular, industrial scale looting of public resources, notably in key SOEs like Transnet, Eskom, Denel, Prasa, SAA and the SABC.

This looting was aided and abetted by all manner of lumpen-capitalists (Brett Kebble, Agliotti, the Guptas, the Watsons, the EFF’s Mazzoti, etc.)

What’s the point of schematically distinguishing two related by different “primitive accumulation” phases?

Both of these approaches to primitive accumulation were (and remain) highly problematic. They are anti-working class. However, it is important to distinguish these different phases in order for the SACP (and progressives more generally) to better understand the tactical and strategic terrain on which we need to struggle.

For the “state capture” networks, looting the likes of Eskom and Transnet into near-death experiences is their core business. But established capital (and the broader South Africa community, not least the working class and poor) require functioning (mostly) publicly supplied energy and logistics systems

The CC political report is, therefore, right to note that: “This is why it has been possible (and essential) to build a multi-class patriotic front of forces that includes the working class against “state capture” in which beneficiaries of the first (BEE) wave of primitive accumulation have played a leading role (Sipho Pityana, but also Ramaphosa himself) along with mainstream monopoly capital (Busa, BLSA, etc.)

“This broad anti-state capture front - within which the SACP has played (and must continue to play) a sometimes leading role - has helped to unseat Zuma as president, and has helped to bring the country back from the constitutional and economic brink upon which we were teetering. But many dangers remain in the face of an increasingly desperate fight-back campaign.”

So where is the ANC in all of this?

Significant and factionalised parts of the ANC's organisational machinery now constitute the most clear and present danger to our democracy. The state capture faction has bled social property dry, notably through looting SOEs, a key potential for driving a National Democratic Revolution. They have perverted many of the key institutions set up to defend and deepen our democracy. They have plundered a key space for advancing a nation-building cultural revolution, namely the SABC. They have allowed foreign wedding parties to arrive at national air-force bases, they have messed up SARS and its ability to deal with illegal imports that cost tens of thousands of South Africans jobs, and they have been active in billions of rand being exported into tax havens through illegal currency outflows. Instead of defending and deepening our capacity to advance national sovereignty they have eroded it.

The counter-revolution is not located in some marginal white, ultra-right formation or in the CIA headquarters in Langley. It is inside of the ANC itself and, thanks to looting, it is relatively well-resourced.

In the face of this counter-revolution, the ANC is, at best, often flat-footed. At worst, it has become the counter-revolution's HQ.

The Public Protector publishes outrageous findings, attacking President Ramaphosa, and the ANC is off-balance. The EFF targets Cde Pravin Gordhan and the ANC is largely silent. The EFF (choir-boys for the state capture faction) go for Cde Derek Hanekom (and Cde Solly Mapaila), and leading ANC spokespersons join the choir.

In this situation, President Ramaphosa and those within the ANC who understand the need to support him, rely on a slim (and unreliable) majority within the Top 6, the NWC and NEC. Largely as a holding position, President Ramaphosa appeals for ANC unity in an organisation in a state of civil war. At the same time, and wisely, he bypasses the ANC in the hope that the slow-burn of the Zondo commission, the PIC commission, the SARS commission, and a reformed NPA and SARS will

gradually isolate the worst offenders.

While all of this is playing itself out, it is noticeable that the SACP is the only large political party that has actively rallied together with a wide-range of social forces in the struggle against state capture and in defence of those leading this battle within government. Last weekend it was the SACP together with the Kathrada Foundation, Freedom Under Justice, Corruption Watch, Section 27, the Helen Suzman Foundation and dozens more that held a packed mass meeting in the Johannesburg City Hall. Absent was the ANC. Absent was the DA, lost in its contradictory opportunism of simultaneously calling into question the Public Protector's fitness to hold office, while using the very same Public Protector in an attempt to bring down Ramaphosa in the vain hope that Mmusi Maimane will be the last man standing.

In short, the SACP has once more correctly stepped into the breach, as we did within the ANC's parliamentary caucus in 2017 and early 2018, as we did in the run-up to the ANC's Nasrec national conference, as we did in working with the widest patriotic front of forces in the defence of democracy, constitutionality, non-racial nation-building, and national sovereignty.

But wait a moment. Wasn't this meant to be the strategic vocation of the ANC, a broad church, multi-class movement, and not of a vanguard socialist SACP? The Party has had to step into this role because the ANC has largely gone missing-in-action. There can be no advance to socialism on the terrain of Ground Zero, in a South Africa plundered of its public resources – and so the Party's strategic interventions are absolutely correct.

Collectively we have helped to pull the country back from the brink of total collapse. Progress is being made, not least through the Zondo and other commissions, in exposing the sheer scale of parasitic looting. This progress has also outed the EFF, removing its anti-corruption

camouflage, revealing it for what it really is, as it seeks to defend Tom Moyane or a thoroughly discredited Public Protector.

But where is all of this going? Will the rolling back of the state capture faction simply return us to the failed 1996, neo-liberal project?

Mindful of these challenges, at our 2017 National Congress, the Party resolved that there was a double task confronting us – with organisational implications: we need both to help foster a broad patriotic front in defence of democracy, constitutionalism and nation building AND we need a Left Popular Front (or Fronts).

And here, all of the questions we have posed of the ANC, using Le Duan as inspiration, come back to us as the SACP.

Do we have the correct strategic line? Do we have the appropriate organisational machinery and resources to carry forward the strategic line? With 300 000 members can we describe ourselves still as a vanguard Party of cadres? As our NDR wobbles and our country staggers on the brink, has the SACP been overly pre-occupied with a narrow parliamentary electoralism?

Has the Party's necessary (as I have argued) activism within the “palace politics” of ANC and Alliance politics, detracted from our socialist vanguard tasks? Or from an active and campaigning presence amongst the working class and poor?

I have my own views on these matters. It is not my intention to advance them here in any detail – but I hope that at least the input helps to provoke further collective discussion.

But, in conclusion, let us return, as promised to Mrs N. She will be going back to the Sassa offices in Gugulethu on Monday.

Le Duan tells us that a defining feature of a cadre is “close contact with the masses”, learning from their struggles, and infusing their struggles with a sense of purpose and organisation. For many years the SACP has identified the Know Your Neighbourhood as a key party campaign.

There are Party branches in Gugulethu. Do they know what is going on in the Sassa queue? Are the staff at the Sassa offices unionised? Is it not possible to suggest that some basic queue management would be a good thing and a small revolutionary act in its own right?

How do we expect the working class to defeat capitalism if they are stuck in queues?

I am not criticising Gugulethu SACP branches, I am asking self-critical questions collectively of ourselves.

Let us honour 98 years of unbroken revolutionary communist party struggle in South Africa by never tiring of asking critical and self-critical questions. ●

Endnotes

1 Le Duan, Some Present Tasks available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/le-duan/works/1974/some-present-tasks/ch03.htm>

2 www.sahistory.or.za/archive/speech-annual-national-conference-black-management-forum

PRESCRIBED ASSETS

It matters where we invest our pension funds

Tebogo Phadu argues the case for re-introducing statutory prescribed asset obligations for pension funds – and that the time to do so is now

Let us locate this article, on prescribed assets and the role pension of funds – within the context of the Marxist critique of capitalism. Investment decisions on pension funds cannot be solely left to asset managers and the bosses – they do matter to their workers, to communities and indeed to our democracy. It is important to impose policy measures, so we can assess the extent in which some of these interventions take the struggles of the working class forward in a strategic, socialist direction.

In this article, we argue that how and where investments are made is critical for our struggle for economic transformation and that, in the case of pension funds, debate on prescribed assets is critical.

We understand capitalism as a social system that organises the economy and society around the profit motive and private ownership of the means of producing wealth. Everything else – particularly the well-being of people and the environment – are secondary to this profit motive.

It is therefore central to a Marxist critique of capitalism that its investment decisions, largely taken in bosses' boardrooms, are taken primarily on the basis of private profit maximisation – what Marx calls,

the M-C-M (money-commodity-money) formula of capital, which is based on the logic of endless process of investing or reinvesting money to make more money.

The consequence of decisions dominated by such formulae is that they create a systematic pattern of investments and growth that negatively affect the lives of the majority. When taken together such decisions show, in the final analysis, that capitalism is an irrational system.

Today we notice big-business owners advertising their investments in “social responsibility” investments or producing “sustainability reports” or charity based contributions. These actions, part of their marketing strategies, do not dilute the basic fact of capitalist economy as a system based on endless desire for private profit maximisation, for endless growth for growth’s sake, and not for social and environmental needs.

We can highlight at least three main reasons why such decisions make capitalism an irrational system:

- Private profit maximising investment decisions tend to generate concentration of wealth, which becomes concentration of economic power in big business. And of course, with such power they are able as a class to consciously deploy it politically for their interests.
- Private profit-maximising investments do not take into account “negative externalities” — pollution, resource depletion, social disruption, precarious employment, financial exclusions, and so on. In the pension fund industry, for example, pension-fund managers who invest workers’ money will use their professional training to find companies that will maximise profits. The way the system is set up is that they are not supposed to even think about the devastating effects that these companies’ products have upon people or environment – mere “externalities” of no concern to those who invest.

One example is the proliferation of shopping malls in the townships and semi-rural areas. Many of these multi-billion-rand investments were made by representatives of pension funds, like the Public Investment Corporation. The ‘externality problem’ – the closure of local grocery stores and destruction of livelihood alternatives does not concern these investors. All they are concerned about is the quick profits associated with these kinds of investments. Shopping malls are by nature not decent work creating projects, and their development impact on a township or village economy is always doubtful.

- Investments driven through private profit maximisation often lead to under-provision of “public goods”, particularly of things like skills development, health care and general social and economic infrastructure that benefit the working-class majority.

The left has not only critiqued capitalist investments along these lines but have historically offered two strategic responses. The first can be defined as a reformist response, favoured by social democratic parties/movements. In such cases, the state will intervene in the economy, but in essence this leaves private ownership and profit maximisation largely intact. State power will surely be deployed to counteract in various ways the effects (and not the causes) of profit-maximisation. For example regulations will be designed to prevent “negative externalities” or internalise their costs (labour market legislation, environmental impact assessment and so on). The state will directly provide public goods neglected by the market and various redistributive interventions intended to counteract at least some of the effects of concentrations of wealth.

The second response can be defined as revolutionary or transformative, in which reform measures are calculated to bring about a radical change and socialist orientation of society. In essence investment decisions are determined by the social needs and priorities rather than

purely on profit taking. Private ownership is challenged in variety of ways, particularly through state interventions in the “commanding heights of the economy” and/or “strategic sectors” of the economy. This can involve establishment of state-owned enterprises and fostering socially-owned enterprises which are preponderant in the ownership and control structure of the economy. In addition, the revolutionary process may involve active involvement or empowerment of the protagonists – the workers and communities – in the process of decision-making.

In all these cases, we can learn important lessons from the errors committed by the socialist projects of the 20th century – the collapse of the Soviet bloc, crises of social democracy, and, of course, crises of some of the national democratic revolutionary projects in countries of the South. These lessons teach us the strengths and weaknesses of those projects. The rise of neo-liberalism few decades ago has seen, with few exceptions, the reversal of left advances in these areas, including the dismantling of the regulatory provisions and the weakening of the role of the public sector in the economy. It was a period in which we were told “there is no alternative”. But the time of neoliberal triumphalism has passed. The 2008-09 crisis of capitalism – the Great Recession – has exposed the fallacy of neoliberal capitalism. In its wake, global inequality has increased, poverty and unemployment at crisis levels, and environmental crisis threatening our civilisation.

And for the left the question remains: how do we direct the social trajectory of the current patterns of investments and discipline capital? How do we impose a different logic from that of capital? This question is relevant to the topic on the pension funds’ investments, understood broadly to include provident and other retirement funds.

In our context, there has been insufficient investment in productive activities. Yet the country has a large and powerful pension fund indus-

try, one of the top 11 in the world. Workers contribute tens of billions of rands every year to pensions funds. By 2017 the industry had a gross value of more than R4-trillion. Pensions cover most workers in the formal sector – that is full-time workers with benefits. And when we add other benefits (retirement annuities, life assurance contributions etc), the retirement contribution figures are even higher.

But most these resources are not invested in productive sectors. They are instead largely locked in speculative instruments linked to the stock exchange. Not many workers realize that their pension funds are being channelled into the coffers of big business with appalling records of environmental injustices and violation of workers' rights.

A huge portion of investment decisions that spawned the rapid middle-strata development, like town house development, golf estates, shopping malls, private health care and so on comes from workers' pensions funds.

Within the ANC-led Alliance we have been having this debate for decades, dating back to the 1992-1993 period. The results are indirectly reflected in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) of 1994. This debate is centred around how we can mobilise these financial resources to boost investment, to support growth and development. We saw the debate resurface again in the run-up to the Mangaung conference of the ANC ... and then disappear.

What then are the issues in this debate? Before we get into that, a brief background on the role of pension funds in the pre-1994 era is required.

Prescribed assets

During the apartheid era, prescribed asset legislation was used to generate investment. This legislation was introduced in the Pensions Fund Act of 1956.

It was compulsory for every fund to invest at least 10% of its total assets in government stock and another 40% in other prescribed stock (which also included government stock). These figures peaked at 22,5% and 55% respectively in 1977, at the height of apartheid.

Prescribed assets included National Defence Bonds, Iscor, Sasol, various water services, economic development and the homeland system.

It is interesting to note that, during apartheid, capital and the white population generally accepted these prescribed assets. Many funds invested voluntarily, at higher levels than were legally required. This started to change in the 1980s, when the apartheid system delivered falling rates of returns (negative in some cases). There were clearly dwindling benefits for supporting the apartheid system.

Under enormous pressure from capital, and wishing to keep prescribed assets out of the hands of a future democratic government, the apartheid government abolished prescribed assets on the eve of apartheid's downfall. At that stage, the prescribed assets requirement stood at 53%. In short, pension funds were used, with the full consent of capital and white population.

One reason for the current low level of investment in South Africa is the massive outflow of capital. South Africa's largest companies have moved their headquarters and listings to London and New York, resulting in a net capital outflow of R50-billion in 2000. In addition, the state (including state-owned enterprises) has been heavily cutting back on investment. As democracy dawned, this instrument was strategically withdrawn.

'Socially targeted investments'

Post-1994, the debate firstly emerged during the formulation of the RDP, which identified the developmental role of the pension fund of industry. The RDP stated that if financial institutions do not voluntarily

go for “socially desirable and economically targeted investments”, legislation should be passed to stipulate that a specified portion of all pension and provident funds must go into specific, government-endorsed development projects.

Some argue that trade union-related funds should lead by example – union trustees are not active in diverting investments towards productive activities. What we call union controlled funds are not controlled by workers. Asset managers control these funds. Nearly 2% of pension funds are trade union related. Even 2% of the R4-trillion pension funds is the lot of money.

At the 1998 Presidential Jobs Summit, Cosatu pushed hard for some form of socially targeted investments. This issue was negotiated at one of the technical working groups, where the officials in National Treasury joined white capital in fiercely resisting the proposal.

The 2001 report of the Black Economic Empowerment Commission, chaired by Cde Cyril Ramaphosa, focused on the establishment of an “investment for growth accord”. This accord was expected to promote the channelling of pension fund assets into socially targeted investments, through social consensus or through government intervention. Again, it was blocked in government.

Asset managers for short-term bias

Many large asset managers have an inherent short-term, speculative investment bias: this is the heart of competition in the industry. Since funds are assessed on a quarterly basis, any fund investing long-term will lose members to other funds with better short-term results. If anything, without government intervention to impose long-term investment obligations through prescription, no single pension fund will be prepared to take that risk because currently there is no rule for long-term investment applicable all funds.

Some asset managers argue, however, that they are willing to invest in the development of the country, provided that the state provides some guarantee to these investments. This should certainly be opened for debate.

Way forward – time for action

The ANC and the Alliance as a whole must take the lead in driving the case for prescribed assets. We could identify investments infrastructure (public transport, new human settlements etc) and productive activities, such as job-intensive value chains. The state could also put together different investment options with different rates of return and risk profiles, thus reducing the overall risk to individual funds. New government bonds, including municipal bonds could also be introduced.

The case for re-introducing prescribed assets is very strong – let us make it happen this time around. ●

Cde Phadu is a member of the Gauteng PEC

ANC

Making organisational renewal real

Barry James Mitchell discusses new approaches to reinvigorating the ANC's methods of mobilisation and political strategy to foster people-centred, participatory democracy

This article explores the theoretical content of the African National Congress's 54th Conference, related to **Organisational Renewal**, it also aims to supplement these resolutions with workable alternatives that could be considered for implementation at all levels of the organisation. This analysis in no way dismisses the democratic decisions of the 54th National Conference, although it does provide some practical guidelines that aim to strengthen the political, organisational and theoretical work undertaken by the ANC. It further draws inspiration and aid from political parties and movements internationally.

A discussion document related to this mammoth task ought to always be buttressed by the principle that any movement or organisation must consider steps towards reorganising its apparatus to better suit the ever-changing conditions in which it operates. Of principle concern here is the hegemonic relations that the ANC seeks to develop, strengthen and re-establish among our structures, our communities and South African society at large.

Resolution five of the 54th Conference of the ANC, entitled *Organisational Renewal*, carries the following preface:

“The discussions on Organisational Renewal are informed by the

character of the ANC as a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic liberation movement that must organise, mobilise and lead the motive forces and society; and as a registered political party that contests elections, governs and participates as opposition to build a national democratic society.

“The movement therefore has to continually review its organisational state and capacities, and its relationship with the people and society. Since the Port Elizabeth National General Council in 2000, the matter of organisational renewal has occupied our deliberations in the context of the ANC as an Agent for Change. Over the last seventeen years, we’ve adopted numerous decisions on Organisational Renewal and Design, to ensure that the ANC remains a servant of the people and leader of society.”

This starting point underscores a multitude of important variables to be taken into consideration. However, any analysis and guide to action for organisational renewal ought to be prefaced on the structural characteristics of the organisation itself.

The mass character of the ANC

The ANC’s evolution begins with its founding by educated and higher echelon cultural and political black African leaders whose objectives were to fight for the rights of black South Africans, the organisation later progressed, based on the conditions of the struggle, to that of a mass democratic movement that drew in a broad spectrum of social forces and classes into its ranks.

From its founding on 8 January 1912, as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), to its renaming in 1923 (African National Congress), to the joint establishment with the SACP of its armed military wing, *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation/MK), in 1961, to the collaboration and alliance with mass democratic movement forces

in organised labour formations (Congress of South African Trade Unions - Cosatu) as well as civil society (United Democratic Front - UDF and South African National Civic Organisation - Sanco), the ANC's character broadened its mass base of support as a result of subjective domestic conditions in South Africa, the broader objective conditions on the African continent as well as the international political and economic dynamics at play during different phases of struggle.

The 1969 *Strategy and Tactics* document underpins the structural characteristics of the organisation in a poignant way that is still relevant today:

“It is also happening in a new kind of South Africa; a South Africa in which there is a large and well-developed working class whose class consciousness and in which the independent expressions of the working people — their political organs and trade unions are very much part of the liberation front. Thus, our nationalism must not be confused with chauvinism or narrow nationalism of a previous epoch. It must not be confused with the classical drive by an elitist group among the oppressed people to gain ascendancy so that they can replace the oppressor in the exploitation of the mass.”

The liberation movement debate

A relatively contemporary debate has arisen related to the political image of the ANC as characterised as a liberation movement. The debate as to whether the ANC ought to restructure itself in the form of a ‘modern political party’, to change some of its militaristic characteristics and use of terminology, to shed its camouflage fatigues during rallies or to make a transition and reconsider its approach to mobilisation all have their relative merits. However, proponents of this argument are often misplaced in their understanding of the ANC's theoretical and practical objectives. The National Democratic Revolution (NDR) is the theoretic-

cal foundation that underpins the continued struggle against vestiges of colonialism and apartheid. This political objective encompasses the very fabric of the ANC's vision of building a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. Proponents wishing to alter the image and character of the ANC often exclude any concrete comprehension of the ANC's ideological, political and theoretical vision. Their argument is often void of historical and material analysis, with the position of their discourse usually encompassed as follows: "The ANC WAS a liberation movement that fought against the injustices of apartheid. However, after its unbanning, the disbandment of MK in 1990 and its electoral victory in 1994, it ceased to be a liberation movement and transitioned into a political party participating in a democratic society."

Without delving too deeply into the theoretical intricacies of the NDR, the following ought to be brought to the fore as an antithesis to the above argument. The objectives of the NDR were not accomplished post-1994, the struggle for a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society was not achieved as a result of Cde Nelson Mandela being sworn in as President at the Union Buildings; rather these political and juridical victories were important achievements during the first phase in the struggle to advance the objectives of the ANC.

We cannot however be completely dismissive of the *a priori* argument as it does contain some helpful elements that we ought to consider in regard to organisational renewal. By example, have we not exhausted the methodologies in which we mobilise our people? Are our organisational structures, from ward-based branches to the National Executive Committee truly and substantively adapting to the rapid progress of methodologies used by other progressive and popular organisations at an international stage? Are we properly comprehending the serious repercussions of a deepening divide between our motive forces, the organisation and its leadership? Is the ANC accessible to South African

citizens? Is the aloofness that we are often accused of when canvassing during the election period not a result of our inflexibility? Are we not considering the importance of substantively appealing to popular motive forces? Are we too old-fashioned in the sense that we are not attractive to youth? Is the ANC developing concerning trends of tribalism, regionalism and toxic masculinity and patriarchal practices and attitudes?

This document aims to set out some suggestions to answer the above conundrums. By borrowing organisational methodologies used by progressive and popular organisations and movements on an international stage and adapting these strategies to suit the conditions of South Africa, an organisational renewal process might find synthesis between the well-thought-out theoretical resolutions of the 54th National Conference with that of practical and workable realities.

Populism versus Popular: developing hegemony, addressing the national question

South Africa is not immune to the rise of populist movements and demagogic individuals that we have seen rise to power of late. Across the global political stage, populist figures have used hate-filled rhetoric to shore-up support for their narrow agenda, using unattended demands of the populace and tapping into the concerns of the apathetic electorate as a platform for power. Populism however must not be misconstrued with popular, people-driven initiatives that seek to enact substantive transformation and better the lives of the downtrodden and historically disadvantaged. Within the context of South Africa's history, the UDF, as an example, was a broad platform for people's participation in the struggle against apartheid, it consolidated a base of grassroots activists, leaders from faith based organisations, sporting fraternities and civic formations. It developed an amalgamated approach to end

apartheid all whilst guided by the political leadership of the ANC and the SACP in exile and underground. The UDF comprised of a multiplicity of ideological political persuasions, of races and faiths and grew to be a considerable threat to the rotting corpse of Apartheid. The UDF is an important example of how popular mass mobilisation, guided by a selfless political leadership collective developed a hegemonic band of non-homogenous forces towards common tactical and strategic objectives.

The reaffirmation of the 54th National Conference resolutions attest to the theoretical principles of building hegemony in our communities and in society in general:

- Being rooted among the people, representing their interests, concerns and aspirations, transforming society and developing every community;
- Maintaining a vibrant internal democracy in the ANC and supporting the principle and practice of collective leadership;
- Readiness and willingness of our members to serve, and make sacrifices in pursuit of the cause of the people as a whole;
- Readiness to acknowledge and decisively address our weaknesses in order to accelerate the people's struggle;
- Increasing our capacity to plan, coordinate and monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies, and the impact on the people and society; and
- Upholding and building unity across all sections of South Africans and progressive forces in the world in pursuit of the cause of humanity.

The challenges highlighted by the resolutions also shed some light on the massive task of renewing the organisation vis-à-vis tackling the negative manifestations that have accompanied the first phase of the NDR (political and juridical achievements).

Some of these challenges include a loss of confidence in the ANC because of social distance, corruption, nepotism, arrogance, elitism, factionalism, manipulating organisational processes, abusing state power, putting self-interest above the people, leadership weaknesses and loss of integrity, characterised by competition to control state resources, factionalism, conflict, ill-discipline and disunity, the use of state institutions to settle differences a general lack of substantive planning and coordination as well as a misguided focus on mobilising our motive forces for factional or narrow electoral purposes.

Most cadres of the organisation are well-aware of these challenges, and whilst the resolutions of the 54th National Conference provide a workable theoretical context to alter this incorrect behaviour, more than often, resolutions gather dust on the shelves of our branch, regional and provincial offices, only to be revisited on the eve of the next conference.

Hereunder, a set of workable mechanisms will be set forth that provide a practical guide towards re-establishing hegemony in our communities and in society at large, through properly coordinated and planned grassroots initiatives that are led and sustained by our people, and through these mechanisms the critical objective of addressing the national question shall start to bear fruit.

A top-down and bottom-up strategy needed to defeat corruption

The emergence of the malignant cancer of corruption that rapidly metastasised and completely captured the organs of our movement were a direct result of many of the challenges highlighted by the 54th National Conference resolutions. The mass character of the ANC and the movement as a whole has, in certain historical epochs of the liberation struggle, been an entry point for outside influence, the 'broad-church' notion of the ANC has perhaps negated the Confucian dictum that:

“If you open the window for fresh air, you have to expect some flies to blow in.” The nefarious individuals who have managed to undermine the core organisational principles of democratic centralism and accountability to lower structures through the monetary procurement of both the organisation and certain top echelon leaders of the movement, have derailed many of the core tenets of the ANC’s objectives.

However, the most recent flies to blow in from the open window have been a family from India who extended their direct and indirect grip of manipulation and targeted governmental processes, who completely captured many of our pivotal State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), and of most worrisome of all, directly led efforts to capture our state security apparatus. The frightening and intimate details of all these nefarious acts are only now coming to the fore through the Zondo Commission. Billions of Rands have been stolen, competent and loyal government officials have been purged and threatened, and the credibility of the ANC, as the oldest liberation movement in Africa has been tarnished through maleficent behaviour of a few. Worst of all, our motive forces have been ravaged by the onslaught of greed and corruption. Commuter injuries on our rail transport system have skyrocketed due to theft and mismanagement of crucial infrastructure, our core power supply has been sabotaged, and many other acts of grand theft and corruption have taken place. The effect this has on a developmental state, and the ability of the state to perform its developmental role, will be long lasting.

The architects and drivers of the state capture project and their cohorts within the movement and entrenched in the very bureaucratic fabric of the state, referred to by the SACP as “parasitic bourgeoisie”, will have a long-lasting effect on the progress of the governance policy of the ANC in building a united, non-racial, non-sexist, prosperous and democratic society. However, as the late renowned Rivonia Trialist,

Ahmed ‘Kathy’ Kathrada, exclaimed shortly before his death: “State Capture is an extremely serious affront to our democracy, what is even more worrisome and a bigger cause for concern to the movement, is when ANC branches, regions and provinces are captured”. This has been an entry point for this cancer and its associated diseases that will unfortunately take many generations to undo and reverse.

It is without a doubt that the 54th National Conference raised the hope for many towards a process of renewal in the organisation. These sentiments were not only felt by loyal cadres of the movement but also by millions of South Africans outside of the ANC. Already we have witnessed progressive moves to re-establish faith amongst our motive forces and the general public through hard-hitting executive decisions at a national level.

The following questions must then be asked: How do we implement the well thought out and substantive democratic resolutions of the 54th National Conference? How do we renew an organisation in which many vestiges of the state capture project remain deeply entrenched in the mechanisms of the organisation and even more deeply within the bureaucratic fabric of the state?

This document provides some suggestions related to this quagmire, by finding a synthesis between a top-down and bottom-up approach to tackling our organisations challenges. This should be carried out through a confident and decisive executive, capable and determined leadership willing and fearless in their objective to root out corruption within the state. It must go hand in hand with ensuring our SOEs are shifted back on a trajectory of a state capacitated with developmental force as well as by nominating, electing and positioning comrades with foresight and capacity into key strategic centers of power. It must also renew the organisation at a grassroots roots level through popular political education initiatives buttressed by strong internal representative

democracy in our structures.

Workable ways to put the 54th National Conference resolutions into effect

Conference resolutions are the basis of theoretical recommendations for this organisational renewal suggestion discussion document. However, as mentioned in the resolutions themselves, many of the reaffirmations remain relevant and are reproduced from the 53rd National Conference. This document aims not to dismiss the deliberations and outcomes of our most recent conference. It does however attempt to consolidate these resolutions with practical working mechanisms towards a renewal of the organisation.

It is also critical to preface this next section on some of the fundamental aspects of the previous conference, in particular those related to the branch, the most basic but critical of structures of our organisation:

- Branches are the first point of contact with our constituencies/communities and remain the main drivers of mobilising our motive forces towards achieving the objectives of the organisation;
- Branches ought to respond to the needs and aspirations of our motive forces through a variety of mobilisation mechanisms – through ward-based public meetings, coordinated at times by a ward councilor or public representative; and
- Branches remain a key anchor-point for driving development in historically disadvantaged localities and ensuring basic services are met.

The challenges we face at a national level have cascaded down to our most basic structure, the branch. Corruption, nepotism, elitism, gatekeeping, the manipulation of internal democratic processes and self-serving branch executives are all a product of the manifestations described above.

The resolutions that seek to strengthen, support and reinforce the work of branches in the community are indeed noble, some of which include the establishment of sub-committees and sub-structures with a particular focus on sectoral and community engagement. However, creating structure-after-structure is a peripheral bureaucratic measure that does not go to the root of our organisational deficiencies. The below should therefore be considered.

The establishment of Citizens'/People's Councils

The Citizens'/People's Council would be an executive organ elected by means of open citizens' primaries. These Citizens' Councils should be coordinated by the ANC branch executive as well as Alliance partner representatives (SACP, Cosatu and Sanco). The primary administrative and political duties would be carried out by an elected collective drawn from one member of the ANC branch executive, one representative from each Alliance partner and no less than five elected and recognised members of the community. The Citizens'/People's Councils would make decisions, develop a plan of action and implement these plans based on the specific and immediate needs and aspirations of the community. Citizens'/People's Councils could be viewed in a similar light as the now defunct bloc committees established by civic organisations, though the primary difference is a concentrated approach to development, as well as specific emphasis on direct democracy within the locality.

Citizen's/People's Councils would play a pivotal role in tackling many of the challenges highlighted at the 54th Conference. They would narrow the gap between the organisation, its leadership and the communities we serve by ensuring their direct participation in political and civil governance decision making. They would assist in eliminating 'gatekeeping' of the ANC, and all-powerful branch executive commit-

tees (BECs) will have to set aside their often individualist political and careerist aspirations and participate in an inclusive platform.

Citizen's/People's Councils would develop or strengthen hegemonic political and social relations within the community, ward or voting district. Opening platforms for democratic debate and decision-making allow for capacity and intelligence to emerge. Naturally some very real internal and external challenges could arise in this regard. Internally, those who have sat comfortably with the institutional knowledge of the branch and its membership might attempt to thwart a more open and democratic platform. Externally, the flies might be let in. In this regard, careful consideration, political education and training and rationality towards broader and more substantive changes in the community will hopefully prevail.

The 'big organising model'

Drawing lessons from international methodologies/strategies of mobilisation or international benchmarking, the campaign of the American Democrat, Bernie Sanders, is an important focal point. Zack Exley and Becky Bond's book *Rules for revolutionaries, how big organising can change everything* set out some important considerations for our own organisational renewal process. It explores the rapid success of Sander's campaign through an amalgamation of strategies that included a core mass volunteer base inclusive of a well-thought-out central plan/strategy.

The reinventive methodologies used in the campaign were a complete departure from traditional campaign models, which often include top-down political rallies, overconcentrated administrative plans and indirect and impersonal cold-call canvassing from campaign offices. At the centre of the campaign were 'self-starting volunteers' who operated not only from regional campaign offices but more importantly and fun-

damentally at grassroots.

Another key facet of the campaign's principles was the relationship cemented between leadership, fulltime staff and volunteers. Exley and Bond refer to this as a 'peer-to-peer culture' that transcended aloofness and untouchable hierarchies between leadership and volunteers and created an atmosphere of an equal drive towards collective objectives.

Allowing volunteers the space to develop programmes and plans of action in a creative and decentralised way, ensured that the campaign spoke to real issues affecting distinctive constituencies. This however did not translate into a free-for-all volunteer centered campaign, the overall strategy of the campaign was anchored at a central level and filtered down to volunteers who were then given the responsibility to adapt it according to the conditions in each of their constituencies. Timeframes and targets were also in place to ensure that the momentum of the campaign was tracked, and if needs be, interventions were made where necessary.

The vetting of volunteers was also a key principle in the campaign. Volunteers were categorised in terms of the time they could spare for the campaign (their dedication), their level of skill and experience, i.e. developing a rubric of 'asks' from volunteers based on their level of commitment. This also allowed the campaign team to assess the requirements of training for new volunteers.

For the many, not the few campaign strategy

Benchmarking from another innovative campaign strategy for mobilising, Jeremy Corbyn's "For the many, not the few" mobilisation methodology broke the boundaries of traditional British campaigning. By amalgamating a number of tactics from the Sanders campaign into modalities that suit the conditions in the United Kingdom, Corbyn's Labour Party and election campaign brought substantive and consider-

able qualitative and quantitative numbers into Labour's favour.

The campaign strategy used a mixture of traditional mass rallies with online activism. This was all coordinated by a tight-knit and focused team. The emphasis, however, was a targeted approach to attracting a largely apathetic youth constituency. It was not just the strategy and tactics employed by Corbyn's team that made these massive inroads, it was the personality of Corbyn himself. An uncompromising socialist, who cut his activist teeth defending progressive principles and working-class rights, Corbyn never swayed from his principled beliefs towards the run-up to elections and was also recognised by British youth as well as the general public as a politician that spoke truth-to-power and made power truthful.

Of critical importance was the use of innovative campaigning and mobilising software introduced at Labour's Headquarters. Using a communication tool called Chatter, canvassers, activists and volunteers could interact directly with targeted constituencies. Furthermore, senior labour leaders could address immediate concerns, queries and make campaign suggestions to their respective constituencies, support-base and volunteers.

Corbyn's campaign was a relative success as a result of advancing campaign and mobilisation methodologies from traditional rallies addressed by leaders, to that of amalgamated approach to addressing citizens on a personal level through face-to-face canvassing as well as through the use of tech-applications. Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, attended over 90 medium-to-mass rallies, in total addressing over 100 000 supporters.

The battle of ideas and popular political education and discourse

Over and above the challenges raised by delegates during the 54th National Conference were key tenets related to infusing groundwork with

that of strengthening rank-and-file knowledge and understanding of the conditions in which our members operate.

Discussions and debates related to socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of South African society have somewhat subsided post-1994. Self-introspection will indeed point to the fact that membership of the organisation has been caught-up in the plethora of vitriol and rhetoric related to contemporary and sometimes contentious issues. White Monopoly Capital (WMC), Radical Economic Empowerment (RET), Youth Quotas in Parliament and Expropriation of Land without Compensation have all been bellowed out from podiums in a repeated fashion without providing thorough context and content to these terms.

There are innumerable dangers to this. Repetitions of vitriol and rhetoric without context have the potential of infecting our structures with a toxicity of ignorance and brash actions. South Africa is by no means a homogenous society; a constant and careful balance between various cultural and racial differences is a national necessity in bridging the gap between the past and present. This does not however negate another national necessity of ensuring historic injustices are addressed.

ANC Cadres Forums are platforms in which these contemporary matters of national interest ought to be debated and fine-tuned. Moreover, branches ought to be capacitated and capacitate themselves in continuous debate and discussion around these matters of national interest. However, these platforms have become limited to addresses by leadership, whilst rank-and-file members remain dormant spectators. ANC Cadres Forums should be a concentrated platform, limited to a number of branches, addressed by a capacitated leader, cadre or member of society and through this process a concrete theoretical bed-rock will be infused with workable mechanisms for implementation. Membership should also be provided with a substantive portion of

these sessions to engage on relevant and pressing topics, and if needs be, form an anti-thesis, question and develop modalities and through this approach eventually find a synthesis that finds resonance within our communities and find traction within the broader South African society. Opening these platforms for debate and discussion will also eliminate populist vitriol and rhetoric from the form and content of some of the well-intentioned proposals.

As Cde Mandela remarked at the ANC Conference during his last speech as president: “A leader must always allow differences to arise within the ranks of the organisation, as long as these differences do not bring the organisation into disrepute. If the leader suppresses differences of opinion, he/she will be constantly surrounded by ‘yes men’ and ‘yes women’.”

Contestation of ideas and training ANC writers

Drawing from these international benchmarking methods, the ANC ought to reconsider its approach to political education. With the advent of rapid technological advances, the possibilities for online, self-taught political education and training is endless. However, the vast majority of our membership has to contend with an array of social preoccupations on a day-to-day basis, sparing a moment to dedicate time to political education is a task that most cannot undertake.

What is needed is a well-coordinated training programme, not limited to election canvassing and spreading the manifesto message (as important as these tasks are), but a continuous rollout of popular political education that speaks to the subjective socio-political and economic conditions facing our membership, supporters and South African society in general. Critical theorists underscore the root causes of challenges facing a society, our political education tends to over concentrate on uncontemporary matters to the negation of the present. A theoretical

foundation on the classics, on the history of the ANC headed alliance, the struggle against apartheid, the histography of the organisation are all essential sections in the political education curricula of the ANC, however, translating this material into the ‘now’ is a deficiency that ought to be addressed.

A considered approach ought to be taken to train and capacitate membership in the skill of prose, public speaking, speech writing, analysis and article writing. Mainstream media houses (print and digital) are flooded with unprogressive articles that speak to a privileged few and do not go to the proverbial root of the challenges facing society but merely tend to blame the ANC for current social difficulties. The establishment of writers guilds, ANC analysis and writing workshops (on a regular basis) ought to be considered. These workshops can be facilitated and guided by our veterans, by ANC academic and organic intellectuals as well as specialised members of society.

Our rank-and-file membership brave the elements, social conditions and sometimes furious motive forces with astounding dedication in terms of practical groundwork, the imbalance however is that the movement has not equipped these loyal comrades with the theoretical tools to hegemonize society towards the progressive ideals of the movement.

War of position and war of manoeuvre

Prefaced upon Antonio Gramsci’s hegemonic hypothesis is the mobilisation concept of *War of position* and *War of manoeuvre*. Gramsci, the Italian Marxist jailed by Mussolini’s Fascist regime, developed this notion based on the balance of progressive forces within the Italian peninsula. *War of manoeuvre* refers to frontal conflict between classes, where the outcome is decided by direct clashes between revolutionaries and the State. *War of position*, on the other hand, is the more protracted

struggle, trench-by-trench, where forces seek to gain hegemonic influence and power across key sites of power, both within the state and beyond in civil society.

Despite the particular Italian context in which these notions were developed by Gramsci, at a time when the communists' frontal assault on the bourgeois state had been defeated and a protracted struggle against fascism had become the order of the day, the idea of a *War of position* can be applied within the context of internal theoretical nuances and external political, social and economic struggles in South Africa.

The ANC's unity is indeed sacrosanct. OR Tambo was a shining example of ensuring that, despite grave internal organisational and external threats, the hegemony of the ANC's unity remained intact during difficult periods and phases of struggle. The ANC is a multi-class and multi-ideological organisation. It is the non-homogeneity of the organisation that attracts large swathes of differing views, perspectives and people into the ranks of the organisation. It is the multifaceted character of the ANC that assists in strengthening and developing attempts to homogenize our nation. It is the unity of our diversity that bolsters our aim at addressing the national, class and gender question.

Attempting therefore to cement domination of one perspective over others defeats the very character of the ANC and will lead to an organisation, as Cde Mandela warned, purely comprised of 'yes men' and 'yes women'. Healthy principled contestation (leadership and theoretical discourses) within the ranks of the organisation is indeed a necessity to develop the organisation and ensure it maintains a progressive trajectory and does not become stagnant and dogmatic. However, what we have all witnessed of late (despite renewed hopes of progress), is the latter.

Reaffirming and reinforcing the tenets of the NDR

With the results of the national and provincial election now well considered, the organisation requires a concerted concentration on clawing back its majority and building momentum post-elections.

This approach will require a multifaceted strategy. By regaining confidence within our constituencies in proving that the ANC is capable of facing-up to our internal organisational and governance shortfalls, by dealing decisively with crisis-levels of mismanagement, corruption and looting and by placing particular attention on providing much needed services to our people at a local level, this will be but a start to overcoming a recent derailment of the NDR.

This is but one facet of the stratagem to reaffirm and reinforce the core tenet principles of the organisation. The other facet requires a theoretical and practical effort at ensuring that the internal progressive balance of forces gains hegemony within the organisation. The above organisational modalities speak to practical methodologies that could achieve this, by benchmarking international experiences and modalities such as *People's/Citizen's Councils*, by drawing inspiration from and adapting the *Big Organising Model* to conditions within South Africa and by making use of the tactic implemented through the highly successful *For the Many, Not the Few* strategy, the organisation's mobilisation apparatus can re-establish hegemony within our own internal structures, within our relatively apathetic constituencies and within broader South African society.

There is however another key facet that requires special focus. This relates to the ongoing development of the cadre in the realm of the battle of ideas. If the organisation is to contest highly divisive and dangerous rhetoric and vitriol, our rank-and-file membership needs to be constantly equipped with a theoretical underpinning in terms of popular political education. Drawing inference and knowledge from our veter-

ans, academic and organic intellectuals through concentrated sessions at a branch level might be a starting point in this regard. ●

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